DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 308 928 PS 018 062

AUTHOR Halliwell, Gail
TITLE The Leafy Wood State School Story: A Study of Teachers Changing Curriculum Practice in Early Childhood Settings for Five and Six Year Olds.
INSTITUTION Brisbane Coll. of Advanced Education, Kelvin Grove (Australia). School of Early Childhood Studies.
SPONS AGENCY Queensland Dept. of Education, Brisbane (Australia).
REPORT NO ISBN-0-86856-772-8
PUB DATE Mar 89
NOTE 145p.
PUB TYPE Reports - Descriptive (141) -- Guides - Non-Classroom Use (055)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC06 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Change Strategies; *Curriculum Development; Early Childhood Education; *Educational Innovation; *Educational Strategies; *Elementary School Curriculum; Foreign Countries; Individual Differences; Instructional Innovation; Primary Education; Young Children
IDENTIFIERS Australia (Queensland); Hands on Experience; Mixed Age Groups

ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the process involved in a change in curriculum at the Leafy Wood State School of Australia. The change involved most children who began attending the school in 1985 and 1986 (about 180 children aged 5, 6, and 7 years), their parents, 8 teachers, and the school administration team. The decision to change the style of curriculum was related to a concern that too many young children were kept at a disadvantage by curriculum practices in which all children were presented with the same learning experiences at the same time. This report looks at teachers' efforts to create and implement a curriculum which would cater to developmental differences among learners. This curriculum was based on mixed-age classes and hands on activity. Issues and events that influenced teacher actions are discussed. Topics of the report include: (1) preparation for change in the second semester of 1985; (2) the process of getting started; (3) consolidation; (4) facilitation of the learning process; and (5) tentative plans for future changes. Included in the text are photographs, policy and proposal statements, letters to parents and teachers, interviews, and journal entries. (RJC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

THE PROCESS OF CHANGING CURRICULUM PRACTICE

THE LEAFY WOOD STATE SCHOOL STORY

A STUDY OF TEACHERS CHANGING CURRICULUM PRACTICE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD SETTINGS FOR FIVE AND SIX YEAR OLDS

PS 013062

case study prepared by
Gail Halliwell
School of Early Childhood Studies
Brisbane CAE

Published at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education

Acknowledgements

The study on which this report is based would not have been possible without the continuing interest and input that was forthcoming from the staff at the school where the change process was investigated. Their unfailing courtesy and support throughout the year was much appreciated.

This report is based on an earlier report designed for restricted circulation among teachers and students interested in curriculum innovation in early childhood settings. Production of the case study received support in the first instance from the School of Early Childhood Studies, Brisbane C.A.E. and from funds received through the Brisbane North Regional Office, Department of Education, Queensland.

Some photographs by Kevin Boyle.
Graphic art work by Lisbeth Veal.

ISBN 0 86856 772 8

© All Rights Reserved

Curriculum implementation - innovation - teachers - early childhood education

Published at the Brisbane College of Advanced Education
130 Victoria Park Road, Kelvin Grove
Queensland, 4059. Australia.
March 1989.

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION 3

CHAPTER 1
PREPARING FOR CHANGE, SEMESTER 2, 1985 15

CHAPTER 2
GETTING STARTED: THE ECSTASIES ..THEN THE AGONIES 31

CHAPTER 3
CONSOLIDATION IS COMFORTING BUT THE IDEAL IS STILL ELUSIVE 57

CHAPTER 4
FACILITATING THE LEARNING PROCESS: CHILD CHOICE AND TEACHER CONTROL 81

CHAPTER 5
WHERE DID WE END UP AND WHAT HAPPENS NEXT? 105

CONCLUSION
REFLECTING ON THE CHANGE PROCESS 134

We expect an inquiry to be carried out so that certain audiences will benefit - not just to swell the archives, but to help persons toward further understandings. If the readers of our reports are the persons who populate our houses, schools, governments, and industries; and if we are to help them understand social problems and social programs, we must perceive and communicate .. in a way that accommodates their present understandings. Those people have arrived at their understandings mostly through direct and vicarious experience.

And those readers who are most learned and specialized in their disciplines are little different. Though they write and talk with special languages, their own understandings of human affairs are for the most part attained and amended through personal experience. I believe that it is reasonable to conclude that one of the more effective means of adding to understanding for all readers will be by approximating through the words and illustrations of our reports, the natural experience acquired in ordinary personal involvement.

Stake, R.E. *The case study method in social inquiry.*
Educational Researcher, vol. 7. Feb. 1978. pp.5-8

INTRODUCTION

In 1986 a major change in the way the curriculum was to be implemented was initiated at Leafy Wood State School. The change project involved most of the children who began school in 1985 and 1986 [approximately 180 children aged 5, 6, and 7 years], their parents, eight [8] teachers, the school administration team and an impressive variety of people who offered advice and support to those working to make the project a success.

This is a story about the process of change over 1986. The story looks at the actions and reactions that characterised teachers engaged in creating ways of implementing a curriculum which catered for developmental differences among learners. Some reference is made to issues and events that influenced teacher actions.

The story was written, in the first instance, for those involved in the school. It provided an information base for reflection as a basis for future decision-making by those who were involved in 1986.

For other readers, this story about the process of changing curriculum practice will provide an opportunity to achieve some insight into what it is like for teachers to adopt a new ideal, then come to grips with the reality of making changes to tradtional curriculum practices within social contexts where there are many different perceptions on what constitutes appropriate educational experienes for young learners.

Books are great
I like reading

Books are great
I like reading

Books are great
I like reading.

Books are great. I like reading.

BOOKS are g.
I like reading

Books are great.
I like rdding

Books are great
I Like reading.

BOOKS are great
I Like reading.

Books are great
I like reading

six and one-half - and differing abilities and styles

Books are great
I Like reading.

Boors are great
I like reading

Books are great.
I like reading.

Books are great
I like reading

Books are great.
I like reading.

Boor arn great
I like reading

Boods are gr
I like reading

Books arn great
I like reading

Books are great
I like reeding

The writing and drawing samples on these pages were contributed by children aged 6 years 5 months to 6 years 6 months.

Children actively engaged in learning

Adults

creating

environments

which

support

effective

learning

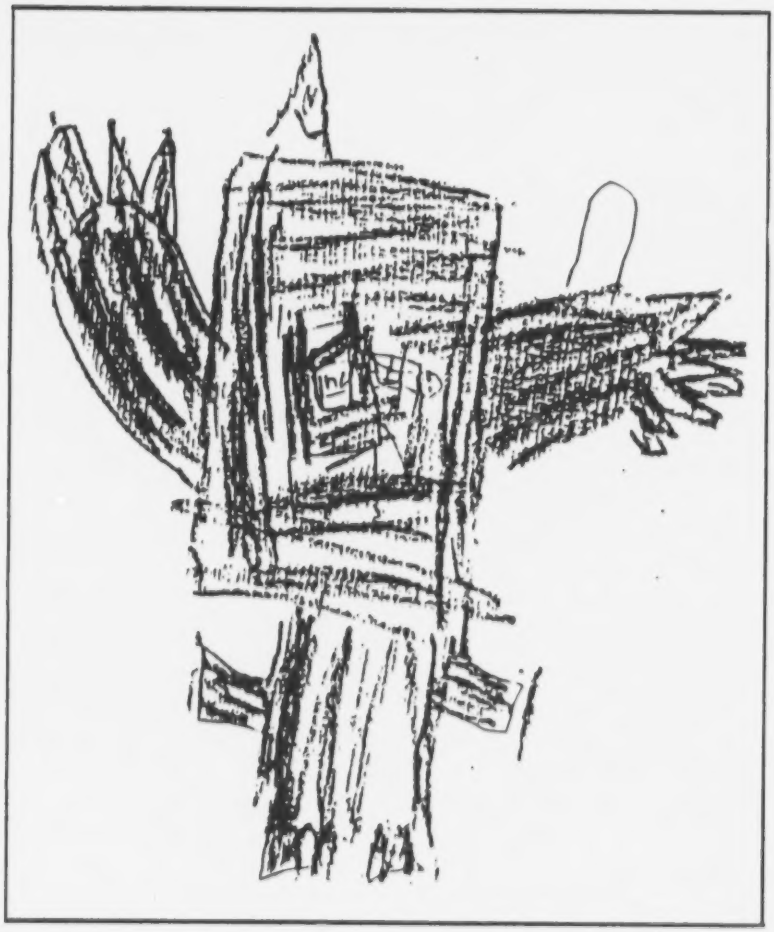
The decision to seek to change the style of curriculum experienced by young children enrolled at the school was related to a continuing concern among experienced teachers and school administrators at Leafy Wood State School. This was a concern that too many young children were being disadvantaged by curriculum practices where all children were presented with the same learning experiences at the same time.

The staff were concerned that such practices created a situation where too many children experienced a sense of failure in their very first attempts at school learning. Children with slower development of auditory and visual discrimination abilities and gross motor abilities, for instance, experienced unnecessary anxiety when they were placed in a situation where they were expected to write at the same pace and in the same way as children who developed in these areas more quickly. Yet given more appropriate opportunities to learn, these slower developers of 5 and 6 years could be achieving at a similar level to others by the end of their first three years of schooling, that is, at about eight years of age. Similarly, young children who learned more quickly than their peers were often bored by situations where they had to repeat work they already knew. They were in danger of losing their enthusiasm for school learning at the very beginning of schooling.

A style of curriculum implementation that responded to developmental differences was considered necessary to overcome these problems. It was thought that a developmentally-based curriculum would provide for more hands-on activity and more flexibility in the time children were able to take to complete activities.

The 1985 climate of EDUCATION 2000 was a catalyst in making the decision to undertake the project at this time. Responses from the wider community in Queensland suggested that educators and parents wanted more flexible curriculum in the first years of schooling, and considered that mixed age classes helped provide for this. It was expected that the introduction of mixed age levels in classrooms would assist teachers to provide increased opportunities for children to learn at the rate most appropriate for them.

In making the decision to organise Year One and Year Two children in double teaching spaces with one teaching team responsible for both year levels, Leafy Grove State School was contributing to the solution of a long-term concern among Queensland junior-primary school teachers. That is, the concern that the curriculum that young children experience responds to and enhances individual patterns of development so as to ensure that every child has the opportunity to reach optimum levels of competency.



I lic the comPutR

WHY THIS STORY IS BEING TOLD

When the decision to change was made, the basic expertise in knowing what was required for more individualised curriculum for young children was already available to the school. The Assistant Principal had a long term interest in the area and had helped teachers over the years to provide developmentally-appropriate learning opportunities for young children in age-graded classrooms. Some of the teachers involved in the project shared this interest and had expertise of their own to bring to the project. Advisers available to the teachers had experience in various aspects of providing appropriate learning opportunities for young children.

What was not available to the staff was information about the change process - how teachers went about the task of changing the ways they implemented the curriculum to achieve the goals set. The teachers had agreed that there was a need to change current practice but found there was very little information about the way to go about it. Everyone knew, of course, that they needed to start by identifying goals and principles to guide the change project. They knew that they needed to assemble resources which would allow for more active, hands-on learning. They were ready to organise the time to allow for more flexibility in the pacing of learning activities. But there were no answers to the following sorts of questions that were asked as teachers began to implement the curriculum in 1986:

> What sorts of problems will I encounter as I start to change the way I do things?
> What seems to work well early in such a project?
> After the first few weeks, then what?
> If I'm still having problems am I going about it the 'wrong way'?
> Is there a 'right' way?

It seemed to be that experimenting with the change process was necessary because there was an inadequate information base to turn to. Early in the year this lack of information about what to expect led to a degree of uncertainty and stress as staff worried whether the changes they made would have the desired outcomes for children. They determined they would not wish that degree of anxiety on others who became involved in similar types of change.

It was generally agreed that there ought to be some form of record kept of what happened during 1986 as an information base for:

- **themselves as they reflected on the process and made plans for the next year**
- **new teachers joining the project at Leafy Wood in the future**
- **teachers in other schools where a similar change project was introduced**

THE REPORT

And so ... it came to pass ... that an early childhood educator with an interest in investigating the processes involved when teachers became involved in changing curriculum practice, happened upon the scene in the fifth week of the school year.

An agreement was soon reached. In order to help others, the staff at Leafy Wood were prepared to have their own experiences throughout 1986 examined in detail. The researcher agreed to produce a detailed report on the change process at Leafy Wood State School, to be used as the school staff saw fit. This is the report.

THE SETTING

This story is set in a peaceful suburb of Brisbane where young, financially stable parents have settled and are raising their children. These parents are very interested in school matters for they expect that schooling will play an important role in the future fortunes of their children.

The following statements taken from the school policy and from some school notes prepared in May 1986 indicate some of the characteristics of the school setting where Early Years Units were introduced in 1986. The policy statement and extracts from the notes indicate that this change project is an initiative well in line with the general school philosophy.

PHILOSOPHY

In this school we are committed to help and guide children to progress towards the full attainment of their potentialities as individuals and as adult members of our society.

We believe that it is our professional responsibility to create an effective school which is characterised by:

- strong administrative leadership
- a school climate conducive to learning
- a school-wide emphasis on basic skills
- a high teacher expectation of pupil performance
- systematic monitoring of pupil performance
- staff cohesion
- regular staff-administration-staff communication
- co-operative planning, preparation and teaching practices
- a strong sense of parent-pupil-teacher-partnership
- harmonious relationships

1. **THE SCHOOL AND ITS ENVIRONMENT**

   1.1 **Community**

   - homogeneous urban middle class group
   - includes army children — between 20% — 30% of population
   - Jennings have a 450 lot development under way
   - 120 sold; selling time 7-8 years — will affect present nil growth

   1.2 **Classroom Accommodation**

   - 27 spaces — 11 double + 5 single
   - 1 modular; 1 demountable

2. **SCHOOL CLIMATE**
   (see philosophy statement in school book)

   - open, caring and warm climate our goal
   - learning and curriculum our business and highest priority
   - high expectations set for staff and pupils
   - partnerships being developed
   - cohesion — a short and long term goal

3. **SCHOOL MANAGEMENT**

3.1 Leadership

- various styles in evidence, including development of emergent leadership in talented staff
- focus is on instructional or curriculum leadership
- examples of leadership practices — school policy

3.2 Policy

- principles developed by Administration Team and then negotiated with staff and community
- shared decision making a feature of policy development, implementation and evaluation
- copy of policy provided to each teaching staff member and is available for others to peruse
- areas of policy are:

PHILOSOPHY
TEACHER DEVELOPMENT
SUPERVISION
ADMINISTRATIVE TEAM MANAGEMENT RESPONSIBILITIES
SCHOOL-BASED CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION
A GOOD CURRENT CURRICULUM PROGRAM
CO-OPERATIVE PLANNING
EVALUATION AND REPORTING TO PARENTS
PARENT AND COMMUNITY EDUCATION/INVOLVEMENT
INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION

4. SCHOOL ORGANISATION

4.1 Pupils

- approximately 80% in mixed age groups in double teaching spaces — called **Units** (see school plan) (all Years 1,2,6,7; some Year 3's, 4's, 5's)
- 4 specialist teachers on site — music, T/L, phys. ed., remedial; a number of visiting teachers providinng support when needed

4.2 Personnel

- 56 — (37 teaching + 19 non-teaching) (see staff list)
- staff management shared by Administrators
- all staff are expected to support the school and its philosophy and make contributions, no matter how small, to policy development processes

4.3 Programs

- Programs are co-operatively generated and geared to the needs of children
- subject areas overviews are provided
- work program formats are not prescribed but recommendations are stated in school policy statements
- Curriculum and timetable balances supervised by Administrators

4.4 Space

- effective and flexible use of teaching spaces an ongoing teacher development priority as well as a classroom management priority

4.5 Material Resources

- an ongoing program to improve quality and quantity
- a Resource and Stock Management Policy is supervised by Administrators

5. CLASSROOM ORGANISATION

5.1 Planning & Preparation

- co-operative planning, preparation and teaching practices our mode of operating
- no set format for recording planning & preparation, but recommendations are made and stated in school policy and take into account Departmental requirements as stated in E.O.G. June 1976
- specialist teachers and administrators are involved
- library flexible timetabling practised
- classroom management recommendations focus on:
  - physical environment
  - expectations
  - time management
  - instructional management

5.2 Teaching Methods

- focus is on children's needs
- teachers use a mix of teacher-directed and teacher facilitated methods
- emphasis is on:
  - active learning involving hands-on experience with concrete materials
  - guided discovery learning
  - development of higher-order thinking skills
  - questioning techniques
  - fostering divergent and open-ended responses to questions and issues
  - frequency and recency as principles in teaching basic work in all subject areas

6 CURRICULUM

- E.O.G. June 1976 definition accepted
- subject areas overviews and Department Curriculum guides provided for each teacher
- curriculum and timetable balance a goal and a shared responsibility of Administrators and staff
- special and innovative programs developed — see Policy Folder
- school-based curriculum development and evaluation is a notable school feature. Outcomes of curriculum research will continue to shape and reshape our programs
- the following principles are used to direct our planned curriculum change initiatives:

> - Change is a slow and gradual process
> - The initial stages of any significant change always involves anxieties and doubts
> - Ongoing support and follow-up assist in coping with anxieties
> - There needs to be a clear illustration of how the new practices can be implemented without too much disruption or extra work and why the new way is better
> - Change requirements must be organised in small, incremental steps and be described in practical and efficient terms
> - Learning new skills takes place best through practice and regular feedback in a threat-free environment
> - Successful change involves pressure that is generated through warm, professional interaction with colleagues.

7. COMMUNITY RELATIONS

- relationships with parent and community groups are good
- parent groups know they are expected to contribute to the development of a cohesive school community
- school buildings and grounds used extensively by community groups
- voluntary parent aides and community resource personnel are heavily involved in our programming

- **Partnership with parents**
  - part of school philosophy
  - examples of Parent Education initiatives in policy statement **also**:
    - Parent Maths Evenings — May 1986
    - School Based Speech Therapy Program — April 1986
    - Home Learning — May 1986
    - Reading, Writing, Handwriting — May — August 1986
    - Bicycle Safety Program — 1st Course May/June — parent run
    - Kanga Cricket — after school — March/April 1986 — staff/parent run

8. SPECIAL FEATURES

- commitment of administrators to creating an effective/good school
- striving towards staff cohesion and morale
- staff and administrator expertise
- staff development — on site and beyond
- shared decision making successes
- school-based curriculum development successes
- quality of parent-staff communication
- parent education and involvement initiatives
- policy development processes
- delightful children

9. SCHOOL DEVELOPMENT

Short Term Plan

- children experiencing and enjoying success in learning
- creation and maintenance of a caring school climate
- fostering and developing partnerships with staff and parents
- provision of school — support systems for children in need
- developing life-long learning skills; habits and attitudes

Long Term Plan

We aim to achieve the following:

- a cohesive school community
- a caring, child-centred working environment
- an effectively functioning school

To achieve these aims the following will be needed:

- vision, commitment and leadership from administrators
- professional commitment from staff
- development of initiatives which will promote the constructive and supportive involvement of parents in their children's learning exeriences.

THE MAIN CHARACTERS

The main characters in this story are the eight teachers who had the task of creating and implementing a style of curriculum practice which responded to developmental differences among children aged five and six years of age. Over the 1986 school year these teachers remained calm and obliging despite being interviewed many times and having their classrooms observed and photographed. The researcher gradually got to know something about each teacher's educational philosophy and the teaching skills they brought to this innovation.

The researcher also learned a little about their lives outside the classroom, for such conscientious teachers found it hard to separate a private life from their professional one. Parenting responsibilities and home duties were inextricably bound up with school decision-making. Seven of the eight teachers were married. Four of them had children attending Leafy Wood State School, with two of these children enrolled in the Early Years Units.

UNIT 1 - LINDA AND HELEN

For both teachers in this team, teaching in Early Years Units brought many new experiences. This was the first time they had taught 5 and 6 year olds, the first time in a team teaching situation, the first time working with mixed age groups, and, the first time in a project aimed at establishing an ungraded approach to the curriculum. Both teachers had a quiet, calm style of interacting with children and approached change with caution. They read widely and reflected on new ideas before attempting to change curriculum practices they had previously used effectively to promote learning.

UNIT 2 - RHONDA AND JAN

Rhonda and Jan had studied together at College, graduating in 1984. They shared similar ideas about good education and were keen to work together. Rhonda was transferred to the school at the start of 1986 and the two teachers were able to work to put their shared philosophy into practice. At the start of 1986 they felt confident about using learning centres to achieve more active learning and more choice in the classroom. For this teaching team the project provided a wonderful opportunity to implement strategies which they believed would give children greater control over their own learning and hence more effective learning.

UNIT 3 - CRIS AND LIZ

Cris and Liz had already begun to work towards change in the way they implemented the curriculum. As a Year One teaching team in 1985 they had introduced learning centres, where children were involved in more hands-on activity in the classroom. In 1986 they were concerned about ensuring that standards were maintained while children from Year one and Year Two were kept busy and engrossed in interesting activities. The strategies that they used successfully previously were now used in the mixed age situation, with some minor adaptations.

UNIT 4 - JAN AND JENNY

Jan and Jenny had worked together previously, had both taught young children before and had been part of the shared decision-making in 1985. They were both particularly concerned about maintaining educational standards while individualising learning opportunities for children. They considered that to do this a well-rounded testing program should form the basis for decision-making about groups within the Unit and early in the year they tested all the children and formed three teaching groups as a basic strategy for managing a mixed age class.

These main characters worked within an administrative climate established by the Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal. This administration team had worked together at the school since 1983.

PRINCIPAL - GRAHAM

Graham had been principal in a number of country and city schools before his appointment to Leafy Wood State School. He believed that his role was to learn about the skills, competencies and goals of the teaching staff and to provide them with challenges which would be satisfying to them while improving the quality of education available to children.

DEPUTY PRINCIPAL - PATRICIA

As a teacher, administrator and researcher Patricia had a long term interest in the quality of education available to young children. In the latter part of 1986 she took study leave to work on her doctorate which focused on young children as learners.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL - RUTH

Ruth brought to her position a wide background of teaching experience in the lower-school, teaching young children in a number of States and observing school systems for the education of young children in Australain States and in the United Kingdom. She had worked in advisory and demonstration teacher positions before taking up an appointment as assistant principal responsible for the lower-primary school.

Ruth could be considered to be a significant catalyst in this change process. During her period as assistant principal at Leafy Wood State School she had worked steadily towards providing the resources and support which enabled teachers in the lower-primary school to make the types of changes described here.

CHAPTER 1

PREPARING FOR CHANGE

Semester 2, 1985

8th August, 1985

Dear

The general staff meeting scheduled for Monday 26th August has been cancelled. Instead we would lke your presence at a meeting in the school staffroom (Mon. 26th Aug. 3.15 — 4.15 p.m.) to discuss: "Grouping of Year 1 & 2 children for 1986".

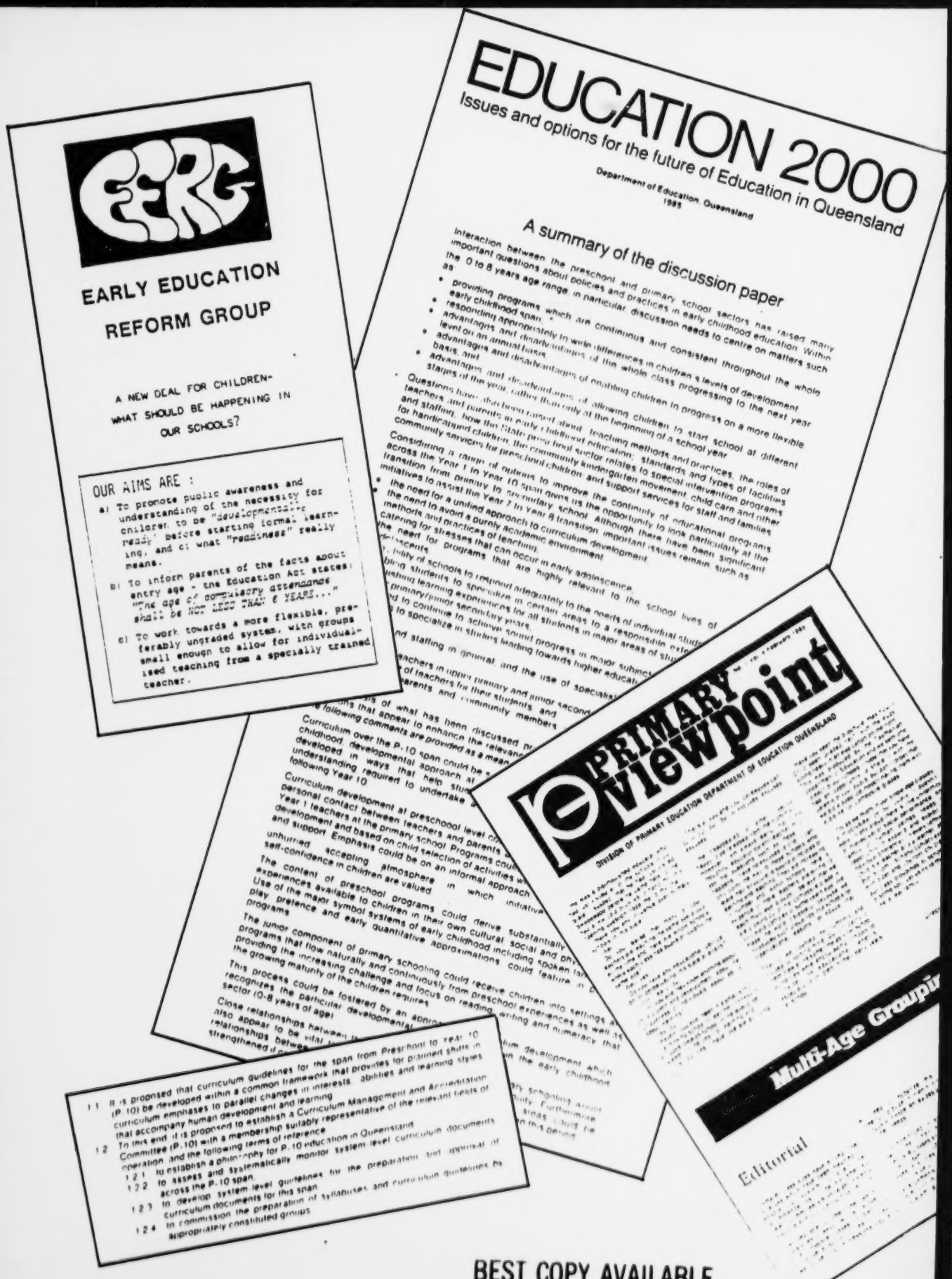
Thank you to those teachers who were able to attend the Craigslea State School workshop. I appreciate the time and energy you expended on both evenings.

I have gone to some pains to reproduce the booklet *Family Groups* and trust you will find it of interest.

Graham has provided the additional reading on Vertical Groupings for you. Your perusal of this material will form the basis for our discussion.

Thank you,

Ruth D.



EERG

EARLY EDUCATION REFORM GROUP

A NEW DEAL FOR CHILDREN-
WHAT SHOULD BE HAPPENING IN OUR SCHOOLS?

OUR AIMS ARE :

a) To promote public awareness and understanding of the necessity for children to be "developmentally ready" before starting formal learning, and of what "readiness" really means.

b) To inform parents of the facts about entry age - the Education Act states: "The age of compulsory attendance shall be Not Less Than 6 YEARS..."

c) To work towards a more flexible, preferably ungraded system, with groups small enough to allow for individualised teaching from a specially trained teacher.

EDUCATION 2000

Issues and options for the future of Education in Queensland

Department of Education, Queensland
1985

A summary of the discussion paper

Interaction between the preschool and primary school sectors has raised many important questions about policies and practices in early childhood education. Within the 0 to 8 years age range, in particular, discussion needs to centre on matters such as

- providing programs which are continuous and consistent throughout the whole early childhood span;
- responding appropriately to wide differences in children's levels of development
- advantages and disadvantages of the whole class progressing to the next year level on an annual basis;
- advantages and disadvantages of enabling children to progress on a more flexible basis; and
- advantages and disadvantages of allowing children to start school at different stages of the year, rather than only at the beginning of a school year.

Questions have also been raised about teaching methods and practices, the roles of teachers and parents in early childhood education, standards and types of facilities and staffing, how the State pre-school sector relates to special intervention programs for handicapped children, the community kindergarten movement, child care and other community services for preschool children and support services for staff and families.

Considering a range of options to improve the continuity of educational programs across the Year 1 to Year 10 span gives us the opportunity to look particularly at the transition from primary to secondary school. Although there have been significant initiatives to assist the Year 7 to Year 8 transition, important issues remain, such as

- the need for a unified approach to curriculum development;
- the need to avoid a purely academic environment;
- methods and practices of teaching;
- catering for stresses that can occur in early adolescence;
- the need for programs that are highly relevant to the school lives of adolescents;
- ...bility of schools to respond adequately to the needs of individual stude...
- ...bling students to specialize in certain areas to a responsible exte...
- ...ensuring learning experiences for all students in major areas of stu...
- ...d to continue to achieve sound progress in major subject...
- ...to specialize in studies leading towards higher educa...

...nd staffing in general, and the use of specialis...

...eachers in upper primary and junior second...
...of teachers for their students, and
...arents and community members

...s of what has been discussed p...
...ts that appear to enhance the relevan...
following comments are provided as a mean...
Curriculum over the P-10 span could be ...
childhood developmental approach at ...
developed in ways that help stu...
understanding required to undertake ...
following Year 10.

Curriculum development at preschool level c...
personal contact between teachers and parents ...
Year 1 teachers at the primary school. Programs could...
development and based on child selection of activities w...
and support. Emphasis could be on an informal approach ...
unhurried, accepting atmosphere in which initiative ...
self-confidence in children are valued.

The content of preschool programs could derive substantially ... and ph...
experiences available to children in their own cultural, social and ...
Use of the major symbol systems of early childhood including spoken lan...
play, pretence and early quantitative approximations could feature in ...
programs.

The junior component of primary schooling could receive children into settings ...
programs that flow naturally and continuously from preschool experiences as well as ...
providing the increasing challenge and focus on reading, writing and numeracy that ...
the growing maturity of the children requires.

This process could be fostered by an appro... ...ulum development which ...
recognizes the particular developmental ... ...in the early childhood ...
sector (0-8 years of age).

Close relationships between ... ...ary schooling would ...
also appear to be vital ... ...ould be ...
relationships between ... ...in this period.
strengthened if ...

1.1 It is proposed that curriculum guidelines for the span from Preschool to Year 10 (P-10) be developed within a common framework that provides for planned shifts in curriculum emphases to parallel changes in interests, abilities and learning styles that accompany human development and learning.

1.2 To this end, it is proposed to establish a Curriculum Management and Accreditation Committee (P-10) with a membership suitably representative of the relevant facets of operation, and the following terms of reference:

1.2.1 to establish a philosophy for P-10 education in Queensland;

1.2.2 to assess and systematically monitor system-level curriculum documents across the P-10 span;

1.2.3 to develop system level guidelines for the preparation and approval of curriculum documents for this span;

1.2.4 to commission the preparation of syllabuses and curriculum guidelines by appropriately constituted groups.

PRIMARY Viewpoint

DIVISION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION QUEENSLAND

Multi-Age Groupi...

Editorial

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

A CLIMATE FOR CHANGE

In mid-1985 it seemed that the climate was right to begin to explore the possibility of alternative grouping strategies in order to achieve more appropriate curriculum experiences for children in the first years of schooling at Leafy Wood State School. The following elements of that climate are particularly significant:

EDUCATION 2000 : As the public debates about curriculum and school organisation of 1985 proceeded, it was becoming evident, to those with an interest in the junior-primary school, that there was wide community support for styles of curriculum for young children that responded to developmental differences.

DIVISION OF PRIMARY EDUCATION: Publications recently produced within the Division of Primary Education indicated a continuing commitment to more flexible curriculum approaches.

TEACHERS: There were staff teaching young children at the school who wanted to implement a more individualised curriculum and considered that mixed age grouping might be a useful way to do this.

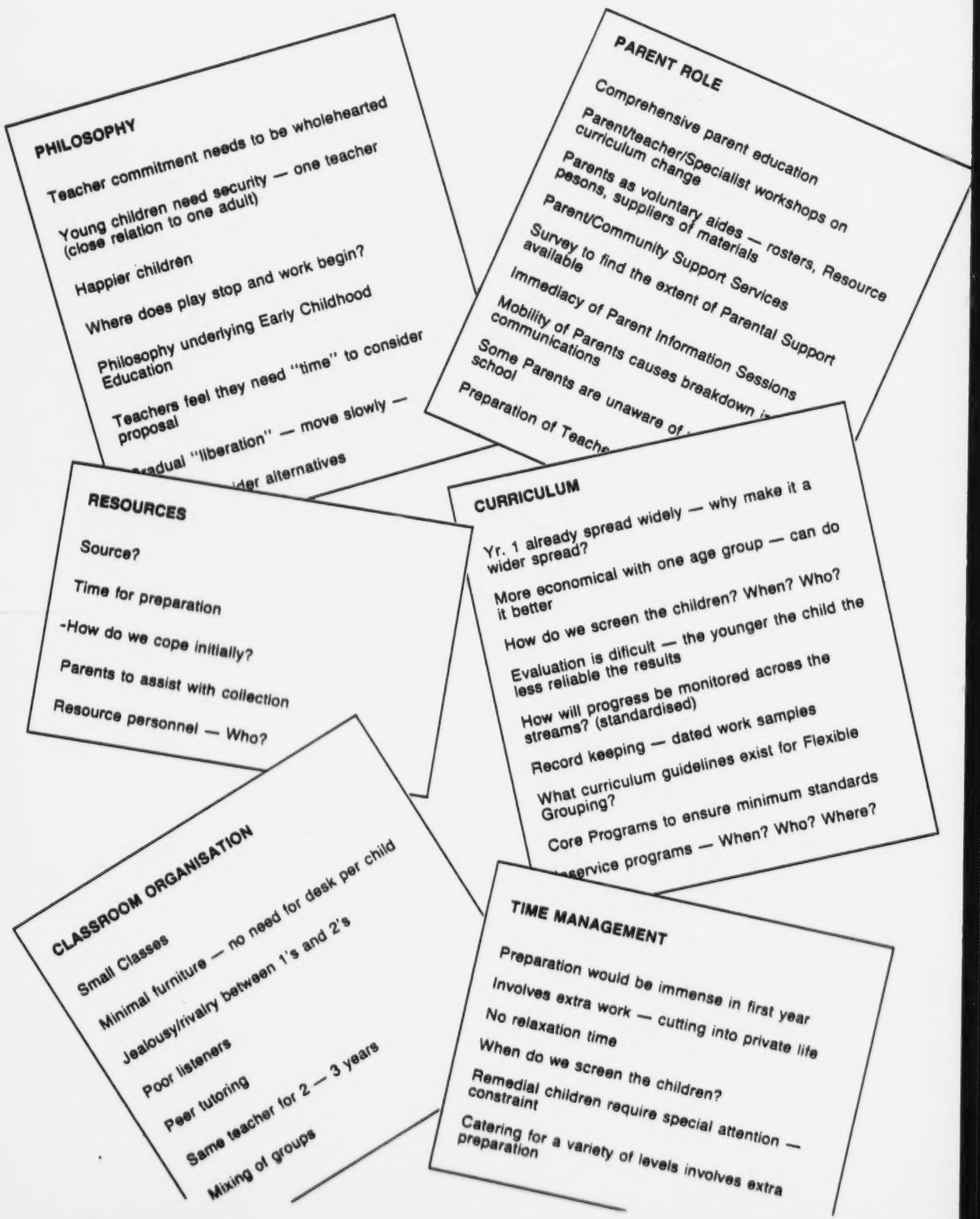
ADMINISTRATION: Members of the administration team were keen to undertake action that would lead to a style of curriculum where children were more involved in hands-on, active learning in the junior school. The Assistant Principal had a background of experience in adapting curriculum practice to cater for developmental differences among 5, 6 and 7 year olds.

PARENTS: Among the parents at the school were some who had voiced a particular interest in establishing ungraded classes in the junior-school.

ADVISERS: At this time there were advisers, both Department of Education officers and volunteers, who were available to assist in any endeavour to establish mixed-age grouping, and/or, ungraded curriculum in the junior school.

CONSTRAINTS

Identified by teachers in August 1985


PHILOSOPHY
Teacher commitment needs to be wholehearted
Young children need security — one teacher (close relation to one adult)
Happier children
Where does play stop and work begin?
Philosophy underlying Early Childhood Education
Teachers feel they need "time" to consider proposal
adual "liberation" — move slowly —
der alternatives
PARENT ROLE
Comprehensive parent education
Parent/teacher/Specialist workshops on curriculum change
Parents as voluntary aides — rosters, Resource pesons, suppliers of materials
Parent/Community Support Services
Survey to find the extent of Parental Support available
Immediacy of Parent Information Sessions
Mobility of Parents causes breakdown i communications
Some Parents are unaware of school
Preparation of Teache
RESOURCES
Source?
Time for preparation
-How do we cope initially?
Parents to assist with collection
Resource personnel — Who?
CURRICULUM
Yr. 1 already spread widely — why make it a wider spread?
More economical with one age group — can do it better
How do we screen the children? When? Who?
Evaluation is dificult — the younger the child the less reliable the results
How will progress be monitored across the streams? (standardised)
Record keeping — dated work samples
What curriculum guidelines exist for Flexible Grouping?
Core Programs to ensure minimum standards
service programs — When? Who? Where?
CLASSROOM ORGANISATION
Small Classes
Minimal furniture — no need for desk per child
Jealousy/rivalry between 1's and 2's
Poor listeners
Peer tutoring
Same teacher for 2 — 3 years
Mixing of groups
TIME MANAGEMENT
Preparation would be immense in first year
Involves extra work — cutting into private life
No relaxation time
When do we screen the children?
Remedial children require special attention — constraint
Catering for a variety of levels involves extra preparation

EARLY DECISION-MAKING EVENTS

Though the beginnings of the ideas underlying this project at Leafy Wood State School go far back, especially in the backgrounds of some key people at the school, this story begins in the last semester of 1985. Beginning in August a series of meetings were held, among staff and with parents, to explore the extent to which ungraded units were perceived to be a useful way to achieve more developmentally-appropriate curriculum experiences for young children at the school. Over that semester the change project gradually took shape, as goals were set and principles about how to achieve those goals were established.

PUBLIC MEETING AT CRAIGSLEA STATE SCHOOL, AUGUST: Six of the teachers working with children in Years 1,2 or 3 classrooms attended the meeting organised by the Early Education Reform Group in August 1985 to promote developmentally-appropriate education for young children. The meeting focused on the 'family-grouping situations implemented at the school. After this meeting the teachers agreed that they were interested in pursuing the idea of some form of mixed age grouping, but did not want to feel constrained to copy the model presented at Craigslea. They felt that their knowledge and skill background was different from those teachers, and they needed to feel able to adapt what they currently could do well, to the new situation. They wanted one of the principles for the change to be 'respect for individual differences among teachers as well as among children'.

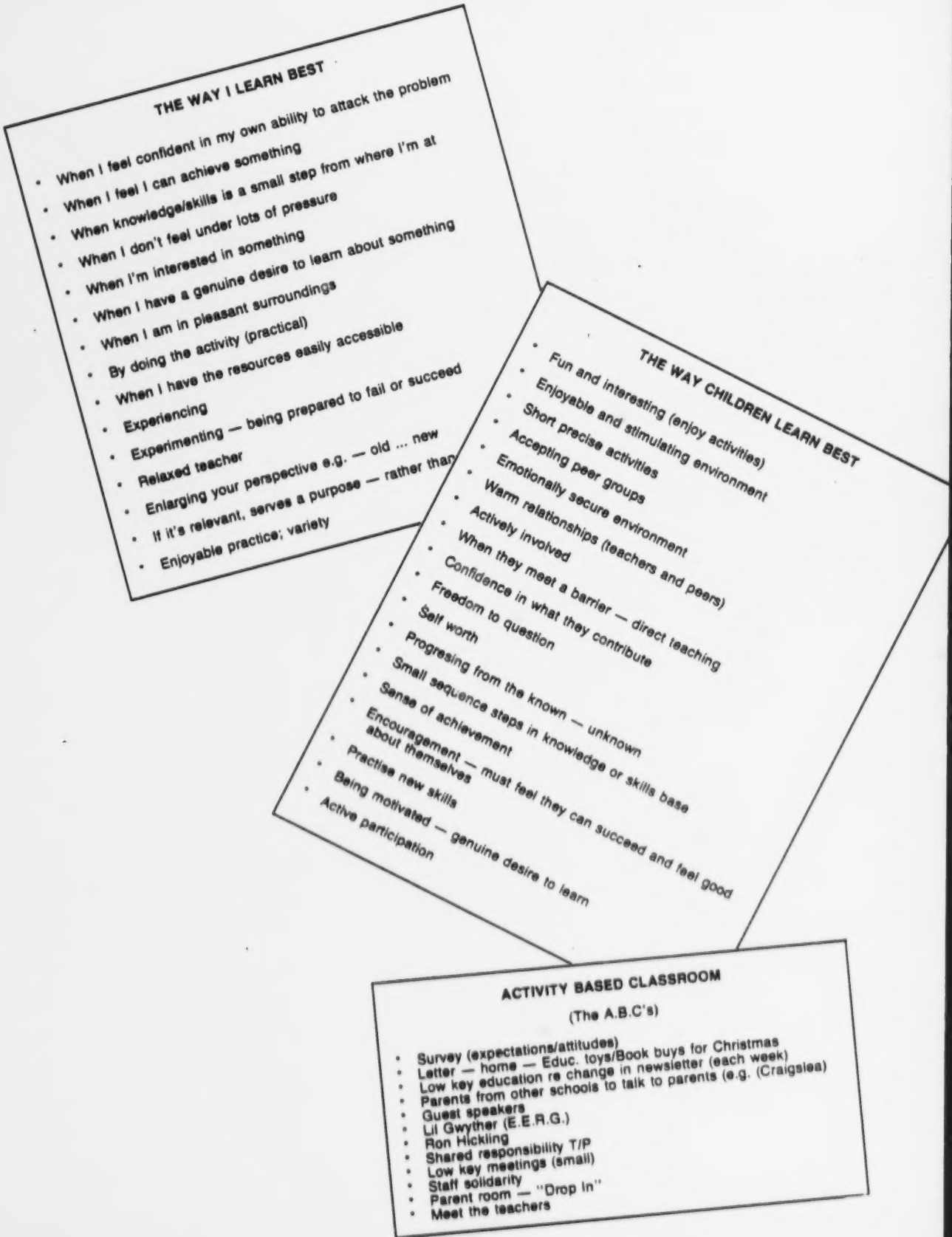
TEACHERS SEMINAR, AUGUST: A seminar for staff was held on August 26 to discuss the idea of introducing ungraded units in 1986. This seminar formalised discussion that had been taking place over the previous months. The seminar sought to identify teacher concerns about making a change towards ungraded units. At this meeting the 2 preschool teachers, all teachers working in Years 1,2 or 3, the remedial teacher and the librarian were present. Following small group discussion it was generally agreed that there were advantages for children in the concept of ungraded units in the junior-school. There were, also, many concerns voiced about how the changes were to be made. It was decided that these concerns constituted possible 'constraints' which had to be addressed in deciding whether to go ahead with the idea. The 'constraints' were used as a basis for discussion over the ensuing months, having been grouped into the following areas:

- philosophic considerations
- curriculum implementation concerns
- resource availability
- time management
- classroom organisation , and
- parent role

[The 'constraints' used as a basis for discussion are shown on opposite page]

DECISION MAKING, AUGUST/SEPTEMBER: Following the August meeting a number of investigations were made. After school meetings were held where agreement was reached about some aspects of the proposal.

- Time was made available for teachers to visit other schools where mixed-age classes had been introduced to promote a more developmentally-appropriate curriculum;
- Advice was sought from others who had some expertise in the area, notably Lil G-, Kathy T-, Sue S-. Teachers reflected on the information gathered from a variety of sources and began to make decisions


THE WAY I LEARN BEST
• When I feel confident in my own ability to attack the problem
• When I feel I can achieve something
• When knowledge/skills is a small step from where I'm at
• When I don't feel under lots of pressure
• When I'm interested in something
• When I have a genuine desire to learn about something
• When I am in pleasant surroundings
• By doing the activity (practical)
• When I have the resources easily accessible
• Experiencing
• Experimenting — being prepared to fail or succeed
• Relaxed teacher
• Enlarging your perspective e.g. — old ... new
• If it's relevant, serves a purpose — rather than
• Enjoyable practice; variety
THE WAY CHILDREN LEARN BEST
• Fun and interesting (enjoy activities)
• Enjoyable and stimulating environment
• Short precise activities
• Accepting peer groups
• Emotionally secure environment
• Warm relationships (teachers and peers)
• Actively involved
• When they meet a barrier — direct teaching
• Confidence in what they contribute
• Freedom to question
• Self worth
• Progresing from the known — unknown
• Small sequence steps in knowledge or skills base
• Sense of achievement
• Encouragement — must feel they can succeed and feel good about themselves
• Practise new skills
• Being motivated — genuine desire to learn
• Active participation
ACTIVITY BASED CLASSROOM
(The A.B.C's)
• Survey (expectations/attitudes)
• Letter — home — Educ. toys/Book buys for Christmas
• Low key education re change in newsletter (each week)
• Parents from other schools to talk to parents (e.g. (Craigslea)
• Guest speakers
• Lil Gwyther (E.E.R.G.)
• Ron Hickling
• Shared responsibility T/P
• Low key meetings (small)
• Staff solidarity
• Parent room — "Drop In"
• Meet the teachers

about strategies for managing time and for re-arranging the room;

- Two teachers attended a three-day workshop on the use of learning centres
- Funds were sought through BRINSEC to purchase resources needed to provide a variety of hands-on learning opportunities for children.
- It was decided to introduce mixed 1,2,3 classes for 1986.
- It was agreed that diversity in classroom organisation and time management would be accepted and valued, as there was diversity in the expertise held by the teachers.

PRESCHOOL PARENTS MEETING, SEPTEMBER: The Assistant Principal was invited to be the guest speaker at a preschool meeting to talk about 'School in '86'. During the meeting she discovered that these parents were aware of her attitude towards multi-age grouping and had heard something about possible changes in class grouping being under discussion among staff at the school. Parents wanted to know more about such things as how children would be screened, how their progress would be determined and how they could be sure that their children would not be disadvantaged.. Discussion about multi-age grouping became the main topic at the meeting and it seemed inevitable to Ruth that she had to share the current thinking among staff about the possibility of introducing multi-age grouping in 1986. She considered this unfortunate as the information served to heighten concerns among many parents at the meeting, and in the community when the news was spread around. As staff had not completed their deliberations at this stage, it was not easy to give any firm information to the community. In addition, the primary school parents were annoyed that this had been discussed at a preschool meeting before they had been informed.

This event served to highlight the importance of one of the 'constraints' already identified - the role of parents in a change project. As Ruth commented during an interview nearly a year later.

> It made us realise that the parental input into the whole program was something that we had to consider. It was one of the constraints that had come up in our earlier discussions and now it made me realise how important it was to communicate with parents and to really have them 'au fait' with what was happening in the rooms before the children started. This became a high priority for the rest of the year and for 1986.
>
> [interview 26.8.86]

WHOLE DAY TEACHER WORK-SHOP, SEPTEMBER: During the pupil-free days those teachers who had nominated to be involved in the project [including 7 of the 8 who finally ended up teaching in the Units] worked with Sue S-, the community liaison officer. Philosophic issues were the focus for the day. Teachers debated their beliefs about learning, with a view to establishing some shared beliefs that teachers would use in making decisions about change. The group also debated what it meant to have an 'activity-based' classroom. [see statements on opposite page] At this time the staff were thinking of calling the proposed re-organised groups 'A,B,C's', but during the series of meetings held to consider how to organise the classroom in terms of the shared beliefs, they decided on the terminology "EARLY YEARS UNITS / MULTI-AGE GROUPS", as a beginning strategy for changing current habits of referring to children by year levels.

PARENTS MEETING, OCTOBER: At this meeting the Principal, Deputy Principal and Assistant Principal made a combined presentation to parents to explain the proposal for Early Year Units. Parents at this stage still expressed some concern and a desire for more information. They were particularly concerned about the inclusion of year three children on the mixed age classes. [See planning for this meeting on page 24.

What is Multi-age grouping?

1. Small classes in
2. Multi-Age settings with
3. Teachers working co-operatively in
4. A variety of spaces with
5. Adults, other than teachers, assisting in some tasks

Why?

To ensure that every child is given the opportunity to achieve his/her full potential.

Recognition that the early years of schooling are crucial and should not be stressful for the child.

Development occurs at different rates with different children. Each individual is unique.

Will it be successful?

Determining factors include:

- teacher commitment
- parental understanding, support + willingness to listen to suggestions.
- parent + teachers working in partnership
- increased resources
- community support
- common beliefs + attitudes of all concerned.
- knowledge of child development

If you have any further queries please feel welcome to discuss them with Admin. / staff or school parent consultant (Sue Shaw)

from Material supplied by parents, teachers + consultant at a series of morning + afternoon teas held in October 1985

What we disliked about our own schooling –

- Threat of failure
- Repeating a class
- Being compared to others
- Strict, tiring + cruel teachers
- Yearly exam
- Made to sit all day
- Being humiliated
- Forgetting homework
- Discouragement of parental participation
- Repetitive learning
- Teacher 'doing' all the thinking
- Kept in after school
- Treated 'all the same'
- Strap
- No choice
- Frustrated
- Disruptive behaviour of others
- Incompetent teachers
- Sarcastic teachers
- Constant changing of schools
- School milk
- Inspectors + Headmasters
- Mapping
- Pastel work
- Copying from b/b.
- Poor achievement - no help given
- Bullying (teachers + peers)
- Being labelled - smart / dumb
- Large classes - no individual attention
- Boring teachers
- School learning - not relevant to one's life
- Over emphasis of numerical results.
- Forced public speaking
- Calling out scores in front of others
- Feeling shy - not accepted
- Categorised as "different"
- Feeling inferior because of cultural difference
- Unable to please others
- Being excluded by others

What we would like for our own children at school –

- Acquire basic skills in 3 R's
- Adaptable to change
- Acquire confidence in performance
- Gain confidence
- Have positive attitude of self
- Attain full potential
- Do well at school
- Become responsible
- Given direction
- Disciplined
- Well adjusted, balance between too much + too little
- Level headed, set limits
- Meaningful experiences
- Good teachers
- Security - continue friendship established at Preschool
- Develop physical skills
- More Music
- Creative
- Expressive
- Motivated
- Independent learner
- Socialise with peers + adults
- develop own personality
- to share + care for others
- Happy + contented

COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICER: In October Sue S-, the Community Liaison Officer for the area helped organise a series of meetings in parents' homes and at school where parents were able to discuss their concerns and gain more information about the idea of multi-age grouping. It appeared that there was a small nucleus of parents with a firm commitment to the philosophy of 'developmentally-based' education and willing to try multi-age grouping. For the majority multi-age grouping was an unfamiliar idea most easily associated with composite classes or with ill conceived innovations which did not benefit their children. For a small number the whole proposal appeared to be alien to their own beliefs about good education.

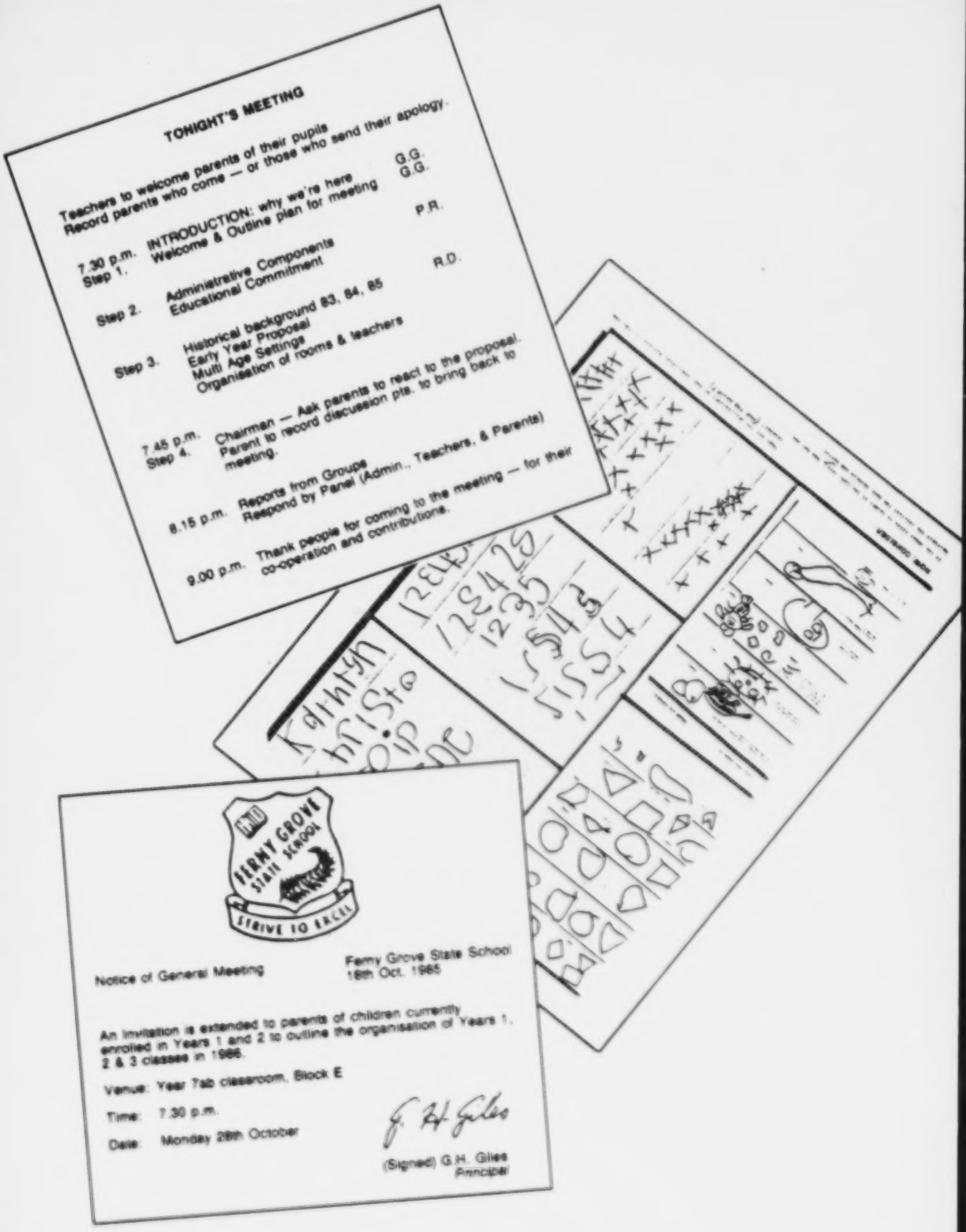
The meetings were successful in helping parents to become better informed and ready to listen to what the school was proposing. Literature about new curriculum approaches and about the philosophy underlying the proposal was made available to parents. A brochure designed around material supplied by parents and teachers at these meetings was distributed. [See opposite page]

TEACHER MEETINGS, OCTOBER: Meetings were devoted to determining principles which would guide the operation of the Units. Some of these principles were incorporated into a proposal for EARLY YEARS UNITS. After some refinement the proposal was distributed to parents. [See copy of proposal on pages 29-30] Principles for the selection of children for each unit for 1986 were decided.

- children who could not settle in Year 1 and who needed to be given extra time should be kept with the same teacher
- 1985 Year Ones and Twos should be mixed across the units
- parents should be able to choose the classes/teachers when siblings were in the junior school
- Year 3 children selected for the units needed to be fairly competent, independent workers

ASSEMBLING RESOURCES: One of the constraints identified by teachers in the early decision-making stages had been the availability of resources. These could be either support personnel who could provide information and help the staff develop necessary skills and materials which suited the evolving philosophy of flexibility and movement of children. The assistant principal took responsibility for researching this area and for taking actions necessary to secure suitable resources. A number of support personnel were brought into contact with teachers in these intial stages. In November a grant of $600.00 was received through BRINSEC funding and efforts were made to use this money immediately:

> ..we got the money in November and had to spend it quickly , so although the time of year wasn't appropriate ,with finalising assessment, end of year interviews and trying to organise excursions, I asked teachers to help put together the resources they wanted and to try and get parents to help them. So we had this mammoth three day workshop building resources in the third last week of school. That was when a lot of games were made. The money was for cardboard, the dividers with hinges or flannelboards and magnet boards that you see in the classrooms. I came in on weekends to get those hinges attached. A lot of effort has been put in by many people. Parent involvement for those three days was wonderful. The staff room was a mass of making and doing and painting and spraying. At that stage, though, I felt I should have been a little more thoughtful. It really created a bit of difficulty with the upper school because we had to take over the staff room and teachers are very possessive of the staff room. Within the school setting there are many things that you have to consider.
>
> Assistant Principal 16.9.86



TONIGHT'S MEETING

Teachers to welcome parents of their pupils
Record parents who come — or those who send their apology.

7.30 p.m. INTRODUCTION: why we're here — G.G.
Step 1. Welcome & Outline plan for meeting — G.G.

Step 2. Administrative Components — P.R.
Educational Commitment

Step 3. Historical background 83, 84, 85 — R.D.
Early Year Proposal
Multi Age Settings
Organisation of rooms & teachers

7.45 p.m. Chairman — Ask parents to react to the proposal.
Step 4. Parent to record discussion pts. to bring back to meeting.

8.15 p.m. Reports from Groups
Respond by Panel (Admin., Teachers, & Parents)

9.00 p.m. Thank people for coming to the meeting — for their co-operation and contributions.

FERNY GROVE STATE SCHOOL
STRIVE TO EXCEL

Notice of General Meeting

Ferny Grove State School
16th Oct. 1985

An invitation is extended to parents of children currently enrolled in Years 1 and 2 to outline the organisation of Years 1, 2 & 3 classes in 1986.

Venue: Year 7ab classroom, Block E

Time: 7.30 p.m.

Date: Monday 28th October

(Signed) G.H. Giles
Principal

INFORMING NEW PARENTS: The school already had an established set of procedures for bringing new parents into the school. All parents were interviewed in October and information gathered about their children, for instance, who they were friendly with and any preferences they had for a particular teacher. Once the children had been assigned to classes parents and children were invited to visit, observe in the classroom and talk with the teacher. Brochures about new teaching methods were handed out. A notice indicating attendance times on the first day were distributed.

> It is important to be an informed parent and the notice sets out exactly what happens on the first day. If you go to a wedding you get an invitation and you know what is going to happen, so you feel comfortable. But if it is a situation that you don't know about you can get off to a bad start. Parents and children should know what is going to happen. So this is written out and each child's name and time to attend is filled in in the blank spaces.
>
> Assistant Principal 26.8.86

ADJUSTING TO SUIT THE CIRCUMSTANCES, NOVEMBER: While the decision to have mixed age 1,2,3 Units appeared to be finalised in September, a number of considerations had to be taken into account in the weeks subsequent to this. These considerations included:

. The staff available following transfers - two of the teachers who had been keen to be in the project were going on accouchement leave and another one was transferred;
. Staff competencies and expressed preferences - some of the teachers expressed a desire to start with a one/two mix first;
. The anticipated numbers of children in the three year levels - the numbers did not lend themselves easily to division into the earlier envisaged groupings;
. Parent perceptions about the project - while parents of children currently in Year One had accepted the changes, those parents whose children were to enter Year Three in 1986 continued to express concern that their children would be disadvantaged by being in with younger children. They believed the children would not receive as much attention as they would in a single year level situation, or, that the children would not work at a higher level.

> We then let the parents know that next year there would be four units of mixed age children. That was when the pressure started to rise. Then we decided that the year threes were to go into separate year three classrooms and that seemed to release all the tension. The then year one parents tended to relax and were relieved to know that their children wouldn't have new teachers. They were very happy with what was happening in their current classrooms.
>
> Assistant Principal 26.8.86

The final decisions about groupings for 1986 were then:

. Four double teaching Units each with approximately 45 Year One and Year Two children
. One double teaching Unit for Year Three children;
. One single teaching space for Year Two children.

SUMMARY - THE IMPORTANCE OF SHARED DECISION-MAKING

On the basis of the reports received (primarily from the Principal and Assistant Principal between June and September 1986) it would appear that the initial stage in this change project at Leafy Wood State School was characterised by a commitment to negotiated decision-making among staff and to the need to keep parents informed and actively supportive of what was being proposed.

> Staff:
> Shared decision-making, within the administration team, and then with the teachers is something we spend a lot of time on to get the best decision possible. That to me is a summary of what we are on about. Part of my role is to look at what will be a challenge they will appreciate and then to set the scene for them to find out for themselves what they want to do ..
>
> Principal 16.9.86

> Graham and Patricia and I work together as a team, plus my role in the school is being in the classroom seeing the classroom daily so that I can keep the communication channels open. .. It is all very well using the jargon I had picked up from my early childhood studies, but it was a different story when I had to tell the teachers .. I had to think to myself what do I mean by an ungraded classroom .. I had to realise that at all stages I should have my communicaiton channels open and that to me has been very difficult. If you are a person who sets your own goal you find it very hard to listen sincerely and take note of what others tell you. So it has been a learning experience for me. I had to share the expertise and perhaps be a little more outgoing, be more aware of the concerns that the teachers were expressing and try and come up with initiatives to overcome a lot of these concerns.
>
> Assistant Principal 26.8.86

A wide range of strategies for involving teachers in the decision-making process were used, including:

- providing school staff with the opportunity to elect to become involved in the Early Years Units <u>after</u> they had some idea of what was involved;
- using the concerns that teachers voiced about possible constraints to implementing the change as a basis for consultation among staff;
- providing opportunities and time for teachers to seek information for themselves - from visits to other schools, discussion with support personnel, attendance at relevant workshops and from other sources selected by teachers;
- fostering open communication through a series of staff meetings, some in school time, where small group discussion and brainstorming were used to help teachers create shared understandings about children and curriculum implementation;
- adopting the principle that diversity among teaching styles was to be valued just as diversity among children's learning styles was being valued in this project.

> .. a part of it was challenging them and setting the scene for them to find out for themselves what they wanted to do in a decision-making sense.
> .. as a professional person often you have to create the opportunities not wait for them ..
> .. the idea is that the teacher makes the decisions [about curriculum implementation], that is their territory; I provide the parameters, the framework and they work within that; if there are problems I will tell the teachers about it.

.. I guess what I am saying is that the administration team is heavily involved in any change project and we are quite proud of the fact that we have been able to do things together, even though we are three very different people with three very different attitudes .. the fundamental unifying thing which gets us together is the belief in children, providing the best for children and doing things really well.

Principal 16.9.86

Parents:
. relationshps with parent and community groups are good
. parent groups know they are expected to contribute to the development of a cohesive school community
. voluntary parent aides and community resource personnel are heavily involved in programming
. partnership with parents is part of the school philosophy
. parent education initiatives are part of school policy '

School Report Notes 1986

While considerable efforts were made to actively involve teachers in negotiations leading to decisions, the strategies employed with parents focused on providing them with information and taking whatever action was necessary to convince them of the wisdom of the decisions made by the staff. Strategies also aimed to encourage parents to volunteer to help in classrooms and in the preparation of resources. However, when parents indicated anxiety about aspects of the proposal the administration team was prepared to spend considerable time listening to their views and they did modify decisions where it seemed necessary. The parents, then, were not explicitly involved in shared decision-making though they did have the opportunity to re-negotiate the decisions made.

Renegotiating decisions with parents, however, appeared to be a somewhat threatening business for some members of staff. Several references indicating a feeling of threat were made, during 1986, to the October '85 period when parents were questioning aspects of the proposal. The feelings of threat may have been associated with a concern about the logistics of re-negotiating decisions after all the work that had gone into reaching decisions among a relatively small number of staff members. It may have been related to a feeling among some staff that they did not yet have the skills to consult effectively with parents from their position as professional educators. A less plausible explanation, given the emphasis on individual rights by all members of the school staff, would be that the staff did not believe that parents had a right to pursue their own views about good education.

A summary of strategies used to inform parents and to gain their support:
. a public meeting where parents were given the opportunity during small group discussion to voice their opinions about the proposal;
. a series of 'drop-in' morning and afternoon teas in parents homes where parents had the opportunity to discuss the proposal in a non-threatening setting;
. Departmental and independent advisory personnel were brought in to explain the advantages of the proposed changes;
. workshops involving parents alongside teachers held to make resources for the Units;
. the administration team made themselves available for individual consultation with parents.

What are the parents thinking, what are the parents thinking, that kept on coming from teachers. It sounded like they were too worried about what the parents think .. but the way to counter parent pressure is to get in there and deliver the goods. I think if you do that you are more likely to silence the people who are likely to get a bit edgy about whether the kids can spell a word correctly.

.. so this partnership, this home/school communication phase is a very important part of it. .. I've lived with parents all my life within the schools and think I understand how they feel, though the city school parents tend to be more anxious .. and the bigger school is a consideration.

Principal 16.9.86

I can't emphasise how important the ground work in 85 was prior to the new school year - informing parents and gaining the confidence of those who were going to be our new parents. We have had no difficulty at all with the current parents because they are highly involved.

.. in our orientation program, which involves the parents coming to see the school working we don't put on a special day, we reason that if parents want to know about a school they must see it operating. They form their own opinions they have their own queries and questions and then when they come back after visiting the classrooms we have something in common to discuss

.. you don't get out front and tell them all about the school, why tell them if they can go and visit and see what is happening.

.. we stress that the program we run here is only possible because of the parents' support

Assistant Principal 16.9.86

LEAFY WOOD STATE SCHOOL PROPOSAL FOR "EARLY YEARS UNITS"

November 1985

The ultimate aim is to reorganise children in their first three years of schooling into Early Years Units. The 1986 aim is the reorganisation of Years One and Two children into ungraded units.

The main reasons for organising ungraded units are:

1. To cater for different developmental levels among children.

- Individual needs are provided for in a less threatening environment.
- Wider opportunities for learning are afforded
- Learning expectations match developmental capabilities
- Children work under guidance but at their own pace, resulting in more effective learning

> " Developmental learning is highly individual and non-competitive; it is short on teaching and long on learning; it is self-regulated rather than adult-regulated; it goes hand in hand with the fulfilment of real life purposes; it emulates the behaviour of people who model the skill in natural use." Holdaway, D. The Foundations of Literacy

2. To create a better balance between subject-matter concerns and individual child concerns.

- The program is to fit the child rather than children fitting the program
- The program is to cater for a variety of groups and for a range of curriculum expectations
- The program is to be adapted to the range of chronological ages as well as the range of past experiences of the children.

3. To stop early school failure

- Flexible groups of mixed ages are to be used, and age-graded, lock-step styles of organisation are to be avoided
- Children in mixed age groups may span 3 to 4 years, relieving the pressure on children who have difficulty in keeping up with class progress, but not retarding the child who is ready to explore a broader range of experiences
- Experiences in mixed age groups are to enrich each member of that group, both socially and academically.
- Younger children who learn quickly are to have the opportunity to work alongside older children
- Peer tutoring is to be facilitated
- Needs-based learning is to be facilitated.

Note: Whole group tuition will still be used when appropriate.
Direct teaching in small groups will be used as necessary

4. To encourage parent involvement

- Parents are to work as partners in the learning process
- Parents are to be invited to choose how they would like to contribute
- The high level of involvement in Preschool is to be aimed for

Intended Outcomes

- **Independent thinkers**
- **responsible pupils who share concern and respect for others**
- **highly motivated learners who reach their fullest potential**

Evaluation Principles

. effective and efficient learning programs are the goal.
. frequent checks of the child's progress is an essential program component.
. pretesting will continue using e.g. Early Years Checklist;
Gates McGintie Readiness Test
. continuous evaluation will be carried out using teacher-made checklists/observation techniques/workfolders; the evaluation folders for each child will be maintained over the three year span
. post testing will be used

Teacher Involvement Principles

. all teachers involved are to demonstrate a positive attitude towards the reorganisation into Early Years Units
. individual differences among teachers as they work towards a reorganisation into Early Years Units are to be encouraged; differences in classrooms are to be expected and valued
. open communication channels between staff working in Early Years Units are to be established, so that ideas re organisation, resources, evaluation techniques and achievable goals can be pooled
. joint decision making is to be used to determine expectations of children in association with a range of developmental levels, that is, a general idea of what it is we expect children to achieve in relation to their developmental level is to be negotiated.

Parent Involvement Principles

. parents are to be partners in promoting learning
. open communication between home and school is to be encouraged; for example, informal get-togethers where literature is available for perusal, where equipment is demonstrated and teachers are available to explain learning programs are to be arranged; videos about types of activities and types of monitoring procedures used to record the child's progress could be prepared
. parent awareness programs are to continue: the more parents become aware of the warm caring environment provided by the teachers, the more their doubts and fears about the reorganisation will be alleviated
. parents are to be invited to choose how they would like to contribute; parent participation may take the following forms -

time in classroom
resource making
helping on excursions
resource persons
sharing days

Principle for getting started

. a ground plan is to be made, covering basic structure, daily routine, and the sorts of strategies to be used to foster child development and learning.

[Distributed to parents in November, 1985 and again in 1986]

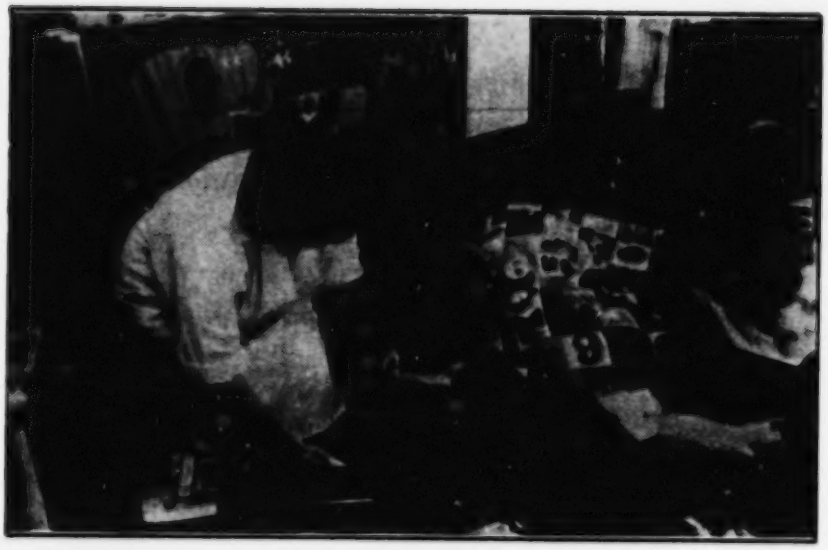
CHAPTER 2

GETTING STARTED:

THE ECSTASIES ..

THEN THE AGONIES

January to March, first quarter



OVERVIEW OF THE CHANGE PROCESS - TO THE EASTER BREAK

This change project was instituted in order to develop curriculum procedures which responded more effectively to developmental differences among children. In the period prior to commencing school on January 28 it had been decided among the teachers and administrators contributing to planning that the most effective strategy for starting to change was to set aside a session each day where

- children had a degree of choice about which tasks they undertook at a particular time, who they worked with and/or how long they took to complete a task, and
- teachers were able to note developmental differences by observing what children did and then adjusting what was provided to respond more effectively to developmental abilities.

In each unit the first one and one-half hour session was organised accordingly. This session was labelled either as a "choosing time" or a "developmental time". It had been established as a principle prior to starting that individual differences were to be encouraged among the teaching teams in the decisions made about the details of organising the program . The naming of the session was one of the early visible signs of this variability in what was emphasised in each classroom.

It was expected, when the change strategy was decided upon, that the teachers and children would soon become accustomed to the style of curriculum implementation used in the first session of the day. Teachers expected that they would then make the necessary adjustments over the rest of the day, to gradually implement a program where other forms of organising for learning took the place of teaching year level groups.

Because the planning for this project had been thoroughly done, the first few weeks of term one gave the teachers many feelings of high achievement and pride, as they watched children settle in. There was a feeling of involvement in something very exciting and important for children.

Expectations, realities and reactions: However, as the weeks progressed it became evident that changes were not going to proceed exactly as planned. The change in the morning session required a lot more fine tuning than had been expected at first. Children did not always respond as expected. Not all parents greeted the change with enthusiasm. Specialist teachers and other calls on teacher time cut into planning for a change of curriculum implementation. Room arrangements needed frequent, minor adjustments. Procedures for monitoring children did not work as well as expected. The teachers found that reverting to curriculum practices that had worked before was often the most viable way of coping, yet this was not what they had expected to do.

WEEK	EVENTS relevant to teacher decision-making	DATA COLLECTION
1. 28 Jan	initial reactions of parents and children are favourable . . or at least benign	
2. 3 Feb		
3 10 Feb		
4. 17 Feb		initial discussion during visit to school to supervise student; meeting over coffee with Assistant Principal and two teachers.
5 24 Feb		
6. 3 Mar		
7. 10 Mar		
8. 17 Mar	EERG meeting on ungraded classes - 10 members of staff from F G are among the 200 in attendance; Regional Director, Brisbane North is a guest speaker	interviews Units 1,2,3,4 group discussion over morning tea
9. 24 Mar	notification of inspector's name and date of inspection; a new inspector for the school; CCP writing becomes an issue after meeting of second year teachers with inspector	interviews Units 1,2,3,4

Of course, when the process of change did not take place exactly as expected the teachers began to experience feelings of anxiety. The anxiety had not been expected either. So, the exhilaration of the first few weeks gradually subsided.

A sense of insecurity and anxiety occurred among the teachers despite the wealth of evidence of success associated with the project. A majority of parents indicated that they were happy with what was happening, the administrators at the school were supportive, visitors to the school were impressed and children appeared to be happy, busy, active, confident. It is possible that these were morale boosters which countered the worst effects of the insecurity associated with change. [The researcher visited another school involved in a similar change project about the same time and found a much higher level of anxiety, less access to advisers and the range of support from parents much lower.]

There were some feelings of satisfaction, as children began to display higher achievements in some areas, but teachers also experienced vague feelings of failure because their expectations about the process of change had not been reflected in the realities of putting ideas into practice. The satisfactions were mixed with anxieties about their seeming inability to predict what might happen next. They did not feel that sense of control over what was happening that they were accustomed to feeling in the areas where they already had skill and expertise.

The need for support networks identified: Teachers began to discover that the path to the ideal of catering for developmental differences was not all roses; it was easy to lose the way; it was easy to get disheartened and it was difficult to predict the directions of change. When they went looking for it they found that there was little information available to them which would give them a better base for making predictions.

It was about this time that the teachers sought contact on some sort of regular basis with other teachers involved in similar attempts to change curriculum practice. The Department of Education had not specifically sponsored these change projects so there was no formal support network provided at this level, though some volunteer support from advisory and consultant staff. The assistant principal made contact with schools near by who were undertaking similar initiatives and a teacher network meeting was arranged for May 1. At about the same time another group of teachers on the Sunshine Coast identified a need for mutual support networks and also arranged an after school meeting to share ideas about how to make 'multi-age grouping' work. This second group met at Caboolture State School on the 22nd May.

GROUPING PATTERNS USED - END OF THE FIRST QUARTER

	UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4
session 1 9.00 - 10.45 Thursday	year level groups	whole group to begin no set grouping for 'choosing time'	whole group to begin 8 set groups for 'developmental time' mixed one/two rotation of activities	no set groups for 'developmental time' specialist teacher groups by year level on Tuesday, Wednesday,
session 2 11.00 - 12.30	year level groups -language	whole group to begin needs groups of 10-12 -language/maths	whole group to begin needs groups -language	year level groups 3 ability groups -language/maths
session 3 1.30 - 3.00	8 set groups rotation through activities	friendship groups	ability groups -mathematics	ability groups

AREAS OF TEACHER DECISION-MAKING

The initial change strategy used by all four units was the re-designing of the first one and one-half hour session of each day. All teaching teams reported making many adjustments to the organising of this session.

The team in Unit 1 were new to team teaching and to working with year one and two children. As a result their main concerns were learning how to work with young children, and how to plan in a team teaching situation. In these circumstances concerns about mixing the two age-groups had to become a secondary matter.

In Unit 2 the teachers were kept occupied determining how to provide real choice for children and still keep track of what children were doing and what they were learning. Learning centres were used extensively and children self-selected activities in whichever learning centre they chose to work. They were not organised into groups for this session.

The team in Unit 3 found that their major concern was one of keeping the children engaged on learning tasks within a program where they made choices. As the two teachers had worked together previously they made extensive use of strategies that had worked well before, dividing children into eight set mixed-age groups and rotating the groups around activities.

For Unit 4 there was a perceived clash between the need to cover work and the time taken by developmental activities. Their testing procedures undertaken at the beginning of the term identified three discrete groups of attainment within the mixed-age class and they found a clash between responding to these discrete ability groups and responding to more individual differences.

Room arrangement: All teachers spent considerable time and energy re-arranging their double-teaching space to accommodate small group activity during the first session. Units 2, 3 and 4 made extensive use of learning centres, while Unit 1 set aside extra tables where small groups could work at set tasks. After brief initial experiments with other grouping arrangements, three of the Units kept a block of 20 to 25 desks and chairs at each end of the room, for Year level groups, during the second and third sessions of the day. Unit 2 began with sets of desks for each year level then re-arranged the space to accommodate groups of ten at any activity planned during the day. All Units had a large carpetted space set aside to accommodate the whole group of 45 when necessary. This space was regularly used at the beginning of each morning session, to give directions and reminders.
Resources: The new resources purchased by the school, or made by parents and teachers were used to good effect during this first session each day, in each room.

Time: Control over the use of time in the first session was shared with children, though the management of this shared time continued to present problems for teachers. Unit 3 soon reverted to a management strategy used in the previous year, where children worked in set mixed ability groups, and rotated around the learning centres under the direction of the teacher. Within the period of time in the learning centre the children were able to select from the activities provided. Units 1 and 4 experienced a clash between their need to cover learning material and the time used for activities where children had more control of what was learned and this led to the temporary abandonment of 'developmental time' in Unit 1 and the limiting of the total amount of time for these sessions in Unit 4.

Grouping: All Units used mixed groups during session one, though different ways of organising the groups were used. Some allowed children to select their own groups, others set up mixed year one and two groups that were to work together throughout the session. All groups used some form of ability or age grouping during the rest of the day, with Unit 2 adding friendship grouping for their afternoon session. These decisions about grouping continued to be a source of insecurity to teachers throughout first term.

Monitoring progress of children during self-selected activity: All teaching teams perceived this as an area where they had a lot to learn. Unit 2 trialled a number of procedures for keeping track of what children did, both the processes and the outcomes, in their self-choice time. Unit 4 used pre-testing extensively during the first weeks to determine their curriculum content and grouping strategies.

Subject areas covered: Although the mixes varied, each Unit provided activities during this first session which promoted learning in the areas of science, social studies, mathematics, language and art. There was more emphasis than previously on hands-on activities using three-dimensional materials and games.

Minor related changes: Minor changes to other parts of the daily routine were perceived to be necessary as a result of the change to the style of curriculum implemented in the first session. The mathematics period for each day was re-located from the morning to the afternoon in two of the units. Time for diary writing or silent reading (USSR) was changed from the morning to the afternoon. These minor changes were more cosmetic in nature than the attempted changes during the morning session. They represented a change in placement in the daily routine not a change in the style of implementing the activity.

Constant Re-adjustment and Fine Tuning of the Physical Setting:

Throughout the first term teachers were constantly making small changes to the way the room was originally organised to accommodate the 'choosing time'. Aspects of the setting that created difficulties at this time were:

Personal storage space: With the change towards a more flexible type of curriculum some of the teaching teams found there were difficulties in providing adequate personal storage space for each child. Prior to the start of the year, chair-bags had been made by parents. These fitted over the back of each chair so that each child had access to the bag, even if someone else was sitting in the chair. However, children could not always locate their chair, or, they had to crisscross the room to use it regularly. Other strategies were tried such as setting up all the tidy boxes in a teacher-made shelving unit. Throughout the term, adjustments to the program were made to find a better way of organising for personal space.

Desk space: In order to make the space for small group work work more successfully, teachers were constantly adjusting the large areas set aside for groups of about 25. Unit 2 chose to abandon this form of organising, using groups of desks and chairs to accommodate a maximum of 10 children.

Display: With the changes teachers had to find new ways of arranging display space, and to work out whether the displays were to be directed at the whole group or to one year level only.

RESPONDING TO THE SOCIAL SETTING

Adjustments were constantly being made to the way in which teachers, children and parents interacted, as the curriculum was implemented for the mixed year level groups. There were more parents in the classroom and more information was made available to parents about the program.

Group labels: All teachers tried using labels as one strategy for breaking down thinking in terms of year level groups. Each double-teaching space was referred to as a 'unit' - Unit1, Unit 2, Unit 3, Unit 4. Each Unit chose a colour and a logo and these were used on badges for children on the first day of school and on chair-bags and other material in each Unit. In Unit 3 the teachers substituted the terms 'fish' and 'chips' for 'ones' and 'twos'. In the other units teachers tried to avoid using 'ones' and 'twos'. Labelling at this level continued to present difficulties throughout the year. Labels like 'koala' continued to be used in some Units for the ability groups set up in language and/or mathematics sessions.

Reactions of children to mixed age-groups: All teachers reported minor difficulties during the first few weeks in getting children to mix across the year levels.

> " we had the year ones and the year twos separated but we had a lot of hostility; the twos didn't like the fact that they were being invaded by year ones and the ones weren't capable of doing what they could do. I think they felt the littlies were taking their special teacher that they had the year before."

> "originally we felt the twos were a bit jealous; we taught them last year and when we started the year ones took so much time. Now they just line up and don't worry whether they've got a one or a two as a partner."

> "the ones need a very special, careful supportive program, and I'm not all that convinced that the twos are all that happy working alongside them; they aren't mixing well."

Dependence and Independence: One of the goals of the project was to encourage children to be independent thinkers. Teachers soon discovered that this was no simple matter of allowing children lots of 'freedom'.

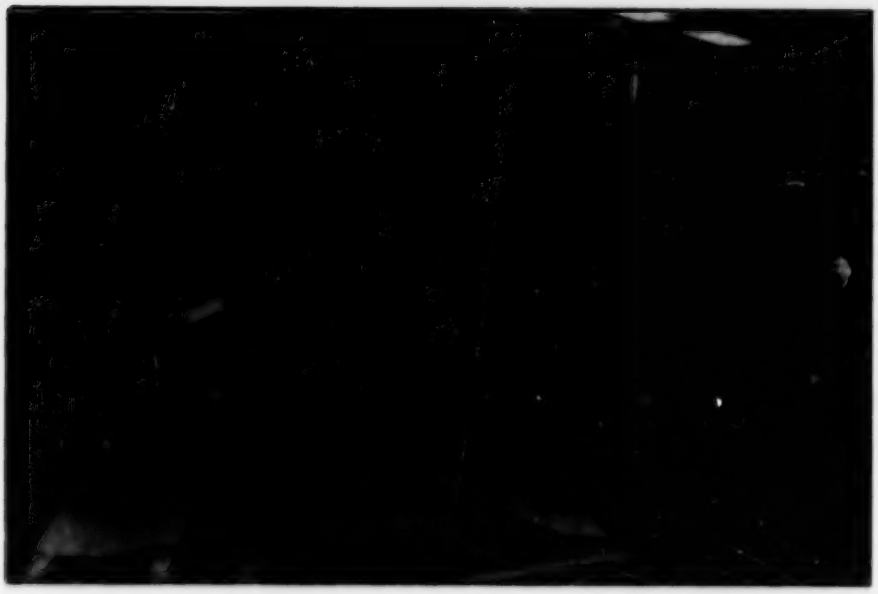
> " they are not ready to work in that situation yet, only a very few; and it gets very demanding if they are left to do something without at least an adult there. A lot of them like the teacher bit.

> " it's still very hard for some children, expecially for the young ones who just don't have any of those skills. A lot of them are still at the play stage and don't need any more than that."

> " this is just time, you can't expect them to come in right from the word go and know who to go to and we're hoping to foster a lot more that the bigger kids will help the little kids. Now that they have accepted the little ones it might work."

> " we found that the twos just went back to drawing because the year ones were doing that. We put the expectation that they were expected to write and off they went, and also there are a couple of good writers and that's given the others an incentive."

> " we're finding that the ones are asking if the twos can read to them."



New outcomes noted: Most teachers were feeling, by the end of first term, that there were some positive changes in what children were learning as a result of the style of curriculum that they were implementing. Most felt that children were becoming a little more accepting of others; that there was a little more responsibility for own learning being displayed. One teaching team was particularly pleased that children were showing increased creativity in writing, though they had not specifically had this as a goal of the changes made.

> "creative writing is coming on really well, incredible really. This may have something to do with the way we are using smaller groups of 5 or 6, and we have the same parent on the same activity each time. They've made some fantastic things and written their stories by themselves with no parent, no supervision for 40 minutes, and the stories are very, very good."

Reactions of parents: It was evident during group discussion [though teachers did not refer to this during the separate interviews], that there was a degree of apprehension at this early stage, about how parents were reacting to the changes. Most parents were very supportive, yet there were concerns that one or two 'trouble-makers' might be criticising what was happening as they waited to collect children at the end of the day. The teachers were aware that change is always threatening to some, and, despite their efforts to keep parents informed and involved, they worried about possible criticism. When a father who visited one morning took exception to a song that was being taught to children, shock waves spread among the ranks.

> [Oh said the blue bird sitting in the tree, I had a wife as well as thee, but she grew fickle and away she flew ..]

The inspector is coming: When notification of an impending visit by a new inspector to the district was received at the end of term, the feelings of insecurity and associated anxiety intensified as here was yet another area where few predictions could be made.

Advisers: During this first term a number of people provided advice about how to implement the curriculum with a mixed age group. Some demonstrated teaching strategies in the classroom. Others offered advice based on their own experience. As the term progressed teachers began to be very interested in finding out how others were operating in similar situations.

EERG meeting: In March a public meeting was held by the Early Education Reform Group to examine the idea of ' Family Grouping - An Ungraded System of Teaching'. Most of the teachers and administrators involved in the project attended this meeting, where they joined with many other teachers involved in similar projects to their own. 200 people attended the meeting, where the Brisbane North Regional Director was one the speakers. The support shown for the idea was another morale booster for the teachers.

CLASSROOM NEWS

No. 2 - May 1986.

Unit 4

Dear Family,

This semester we have been working on a poetry theme and now music. Our next theme will be a science unit, the energy topic Sliding and Rolling. As the year advances we are finding it beneficial to spread the children's developmental time throughout the day. Thus parent help is now very welcome at any time of the day.

Please come up to the school whenever you have any spare time.

SUPPORTING THE TEACHERS

The teachers in the project were supported primarily by the school administrative team, including the principal, deputy principal and the assistant principal. Each member of the team was highly supportive of the project and made this support known to the teachers in a number of ways. The provision of resources funded through P & C funds was one way, others were identifying support and bringing them into contact with the teachers and making time available for group consultation and consultation with the administrators. Most teachers perceived the support to be positive as is indicated in the following statements made during the first round of interviews.

> * There's no particular pressure to conform to a particular program. I mentioned at our school meeting yesterday about curriculum programs, and I get the feeling that the administration is trusting. They believe that we will produce what is needed, and they are happy to support our efforts. Graham said that it is school policy that teachers will devise their own programs and therefore have curriculum responsibilities. He's happy for us to us to sort out our responsibilities for ourselves, though he occasionally has a word to the staff about making sure there's a balance in the time that we spend on different subject areas.
>
> * Ruth hasn't ever made demands upon a particular program in the years I've been here. I've often explained to her what I'm doing but that's for me not for her. She is a tremendous support, by providing lots of people to come in and provide us with ideas.

At the group meeting held in March Ruth defined her role as one of supporting the teachers and introducing other support people to them. She did not see her role as one of directing the teachers but rather of sharing her perspective on what she observed with the teachers. The teachers agreed that this was a role she adopted, and commented that they appreciated that they were free to agree or disagree with her view. They did not feel they had to pretend they agreed and this meant that the staff were not just conforming to someone else's ideas.

KEEPING PARENTS INVOLVED AND INFORMED

The assistant principal also took responsibility for organising a program of parent information and parent involvement in the classroom. She had the following goals for the parent program in the junior school:

> keeping them informed;
> getting them on side;
> helping them to be better parents.

She considered that it was the administrator's responsibility to find out what parents wanted to know and then to provide activities that responded to those wants.

in the teachers' own words ....

summaries from interview data

collected in February/March

UNIT 1 19/3/86
Linda and Helen

As a teaching team we have so many new things to learn. This is our first time in a team teaching situation, first time in a double teaching area, and first time teaching five and six year olds. On top of this we are trying to implement an ungraded program. The hardest thing to come to terms with has been so many little children all in the same place all wanting to do something; not having upwards of 30 seconds break. An older child can sit down and be absorbed in something and you can sit there and just collect your thoughts. But here a maximum of 30 seconds, that represents some sort of a break. At the end of the first week it felt like four weeks. Monday feels like Friday. They are physically demanding; and for every ten seconds of the day there're four things that need to be done; the time is double booked, triple booked; that's what I find. You don't get any thinking time.

. . . . . .

One of the original changes was with the developmental time. Ruth suggested that we start with a developmental time where it would be free choice activities, with some direction to suit the needs of children. Fitting that into what we saw as a timetable where we could also have activities that we saw as maths based, or language-arts based, or social studies based was really difficult.

Also, we started off with the idea of the children not being in two separate groups. We had the tables in groups. The children came in and sat where they liked. The main change has been that we had groups of tables and now we have rows of tables and we did start with the children all mixed and now basically the ones have all their desks and chairs together and the twos have all theirs together.

In the very beginning their chair place was wherever they went to when they first came into the room. But they bring in so many belongings, they've got to feel secure. It's no good having to walk across three-quarters of the room to get some thing; there's a time factor in that. They were having to move their chair and their chair bag all the time; because mostly they were working with the children who started school that year. So we ended up moving all the year one desks and chairs to one end and the two desks and chairs down to the other end. Then we changed the desks and groups to basically a normal setting facing towards the board.

They use that format mostly for directed writing. We have a diary writing session where they sit there facing the board. I suppose it's only two or three times a day that they sit in that setting. We discovered that it was much better if they were all facing the board if you're going to use the blackboard. The other grouping looks better, but it is better for them to face directly towards the blackboard. It's used about three times a day, but it's a nice place to stand in front of and get the attention of the children. You have these dreams of draping paper over the blackboard and making it a display board, but the dreams have all crumpled. We found it was just not logical, it didn't seem to be right to not have them facing the board when they were doing things like left to right and starting on the left hand side.

Then we had their tidy trays in their desks, but the year ones couldn't manage the tidy trays, they'd be running around pushing them all the time. So we took them out and put them in the storage area here.

We've changed the time-table about four or five times already. Sometimes within days our time becomes unsuitable. At present we have mathematics in the first session, lanuage in the middle session and journal writing, sustained silent reading and rotational activities in the afternoon. The rotational activities cover social studies, art and craft, science and health.

Planning time is half an hour like this. We spend some of our weekends trying to snatch an hour to plan together. We've both got children. In the afternoons I want to get home and be here. You want to stay and do a really good job .. but the time.

I don't know how much integration we're ready to do with the two different age groups. Okay we've thrown the idea around of having an independent sort of system where the children say where they've been and record what they've been doing but we've just got to the stage where we're starting to know something about the children and can say, well he should be here then, and this one I'm not sure about and definitely these ones ought to be ..we're just getting to this stage.

When I was doing the reading with the year twos I was going crazy trying to operate three groups and three completely different levels. Even using a different reading scheme takes a lot of time. I've changed to a different reading scheme and am operating it as a whole group, even though in a single class I've worked five groups quite happily, that was what I was used to. So now we've got them into two groups and have a parent helper and we're finding that's working in a more practical sense. We'd like to have five groups but in the practical sense we're doing different levels of the same sorts of things mostly because we're still learning what it is that we have to cover.

We've left a learning centre approach in abeyance until we find out who's who and what's what; and who needs what; we were saying to ourselves, after easter, after easter and now it looks like after June, after June.

At present we have display spaces and places to store things, not learning centres set up with a specific aim for a limited time. They don't go and do their individual learning there yet. At least I don't suppose they are learning centres - I don't know exactly what the definition of a learning centre is.

UNIT 2; 19/3/86 and 25/3/86

Jan and Rhonda

Rhonda knew only two weeks before that she was coming here, though she had hoped to be coming. When I came back from holidays the week before school started, we came in and organised the room. We knew we wanted to do a learning centre style room because we'd both trained together [at Carseldine, second year out] and we'd both realised we had the same educational philosophy and the same ideas about strategies (all that sort of thing)so we knew we could work together.

. . . . . .

This is the first thing, not having any real expectations; you are expecting things to happen and they don't, and even now after eight weeks we are feeling our way very much. A lot of it, we're finding, is just trial and error.

We set up the room in learning centres and that's okay that was fine, but at the same time we had a direct teaching area at each end. We did that for a couple of weeks and thought 'well this isn't what we really want to do because the two age groups aren't mingling', and the year twos we found were really quite annoyed by the little ones - 'why are we in this room with them'? They had been year ones together with Jan the previous year. It's only in the last week or so that they've really started to accept each other. We're feeling more of a unit now, not just the ones and twos shoved in the same room.

We had those separate teaching areas so if Jan was taking the two's I could take the ones for maths and all this sort of thing but we felt that it wasn't working how we wanted. So then we rearranged the room again a few weekends later and made it so that we had more desks in say the maths centre or the handwriting area. We felt we had to do that to accommodate direct teaching situations. So when we were teaching directly we were teaching just a small group of up to ten children; that's how we do our direct teaching now with maths or shared book in the reading area or in the withdrawal room or whatever. We find that better.

We're still trying to work out how each session should work.

We're having a 'choosing time' in the morning where they just choose whatever they want, or if certain individual children have a certain need we direct them into that at choosing time as well so that it is not completely free choosing time I suppose but some kids do need that direction. Organising the children's choosing time still presents problems for us.

The learning centres are used in this session mostly. Some of the centres, the art, the construction, have everything they will need there. One of the children might be working on an aboriginal theme, another making a floor board for cars. Books are there also so they can get ideas. Others are subject centres. We've got materials and games for say maths; if we're covering ordinals to twenty we'd put the appropriate games in for a couple of weeks.

In the middle session, some days we have a full language session, some days we have a full maths session, and some days we have half language and half math. I think we might have to change this after Easter because it doesn't work if you say 'we've got to change over now'. Kids are thinking of things that are important to them and we stop them.

We've found that the best way to work that middle session in maths and language is in ability groups. This doesn't necessarily mean they are at the tables, they can be on the floor with us; or in the withdrawal room doing a shared book or taping or whatever, but they're often directed into activities that will suit their levels rather than choosing, having free choice;

In the afternoon we use more of a thematic approach, with friendship groups and a rotation using mothers. The activities cover science, social studies, health, music and art. It's fairly structured but it works well. We do that over four days and on Fridays we tidy up and stick all the things in books and catch up. There are four activities every week and they do one a day. It works well. Jan did this last year with her year ones. I think it's good that sometimes they have a direction, some activities they must do. We feel that we've covered the individualisation early and then abilities and then this. At this stage anyway.

We try to have, just after lunch, USSR and diary time. We were asking the children initially to do the diaries in their choice time and we found that standard of their diary work was really poor. It really needs to have that quiet time and a bit of supervision there just to make sure they stay on track. They were writing just to get it done and throwing it back in the box. We were getting pretty crummy stuff and we weren't satisfied at all. We've noticed when they've quietened down the standard has been much better. They concentrate. They can write stories when there's noise around but when it's actually thoughts of their own, trying to review what's happened or what's going to happen they can't do that as much when it's too noisy.

One of things we're not really satisfied with at the moment is monitoring , evaluating, that sort of thing; keeping up with how they are choosing to do their own things; whether they are sticking to the one subject area or they're just floating around not doing much at all. It's pretty hard keeping a close check.

Rhonda's doing a sort of grid system now, which is helping. From that you can stand back and say, yes well some children are staying in the same area every day and some children are moving around and doing different things. We've been trialling the grid for a couple of weeks, and it's a lot better than what we were doing. We had contracts and the little ones couldn't cope with that, it was too much to have to remember to do; tick that off and work out what this was. We used to have pictures on the walls with a symbol like an eye or an ear, and these were on the contract. The children just had to tick them when they had finished, Mon,Tues,Wed .. but it was too much skill having to go back to there or .. the year twos could cope but they'd forget .. which they are doing with that grid too, but it's just a matter of time, every day saying don't forget to check off. This is a better way for us to check, because we're not having to check little bits of paper every week, we can just see it from where you are standing in the room. Probably next term we'll have that grid and then another one to say, well, today such and such goes here and there. That's their business then to find out where to go by checking on the board. We've monitored, and given advice and they've to follow it up.

But there's still a lot we want to do in evaluation, to check on children's movements. Because of the structure of the day, you tend to be busy all day and getting to anecdotal records is really hard. Because of their age, the little ones and twos are demanding attention, and wanting to read this to you, to share with you. This is just time, you can't expect them to come in right from the word go and know who to go to. We're hoping to foster a lot more that the bigger kids will help the little kids; now that they have accepted the little ones, it might work.

After Easter we hope to start to make notes of children moving around and maybe direct them a bit more, even though it's their own choice time; we can offer a choice within choices.

We will have our second year inspections this year. There was a meeting of second year teachers with the inspector last week. We would have liked to know what his expectations of us were, what he wants as a written CCP type of thing. The thing is when Jan spoke to him, she was terrified because he had said I want this and this and this. She said, when she came back, how are we going to do it; you can't put what we're doing into that sort of format. So that is a bit of a problem . . .

UNIT 3 21/3/86

Liz and Cris

Cris and I worked together last year and we took part in the planning for this year. We were really keen to try out the mixed age-groups. Last year we had set up learning centres so we thought we could make the 'developmental morning' work.

. . . . . .

The developmental morning was introduced at the beginning of the year to individualise the program more. We started off being less structured; we set up about ten areas and let them choose wherever they went. There were lots of manipulative activities but we found that the twos were becoming naughty because it wasn't structured enough for them; it was all right for the ones with lots of painting and other things they needed.

Our first change was to set up that they had to change half way, there were five activities, and they had to complete all the activities in the week; then we found even monitoring that difficult. We had sheets up in the area and they had to tick off when they finished and so on but it took us ten minutes or a quarter of an hour in the morning to get going; so that went.

Now we put them into mixed groups, into 8 groups with ones and twos in each, 5 to 6 in each group, and 6 areas. They rotate over two weeks; so we plan a two week program. They get more done because they are having about 40 minutes in one area and we get to see more of who can and who can't too. This is especially important for the matns activity where you need to see what they are doing. We plan an activity for maths, science, social studies and language. We have an art area which we have a mother supervise, a wet area and a listening area. There's also a free choice one, though we still limit this in a sense. A few weeks ago we had play dough, threading, and water-play. This time we've limited them to construction or wood play. They've made some fantastic things and written their stories about what they did by themselves with no parent or other supervision for 40 minutes. They are very,very good.

In the listening area they do their writing about the story they had, either a felt story or a book that a parent reads to them; they listen, then they talk about it, then they write. Creative writing is coming on really well; incredible really. This may have something to do with the smaller groups. We have one parent with a group of 5 or 6 and we have the same parent on the same activity each time; like if she comes every Monday she is on listening. She gets to know the groups, and to know what to expect of the children, rather than a different mum each week explaining the whole rigmarole over again of what we expect. We found at the beginning the twos just went back to drawing because the year ones were doing that; but we put the expectation that they were expected to write and off they went. Also there are a couple of good writers and that's given the others an incentive. In the beginning we didn't want to make too much of a difference between the ones and twos; and sorting out how to do that took a while.

We're happy with it at the moment. It's how we used to work it last year, We had four groups of 10; big groups. Smaller groups work much better. On a certain day they complete a certain area. We"ve just gone back to that because we feel much happier with it, probably because we feel more in control. We know where the children are, and I feel the children are getting more out of it. They still have some choice. If they go to maths the games are set out and colour coded, so that the 'fish' [year ones] know they can play with the yellow ones; they can also go onto the other ones but they are to use those ones first.

Planning for the mixed group has presented some difficulties. In the first few weeks we felt the twos were a bit jealous. We taught them last year and now the year ones took so much time. But now they just line up and don't worry whether they've got a one or a two as a partner. Another problem is that we feel we are missing out on real team teaching in the language and maths sessions. You get so

involved with your end of the room that you get out of touch with the other group. Keeping track of the two levels is another problem. We felt confident in maths last year, even when they worked in four groups. We taught at their level in each group. Because we were doing the same books but at different levels we used to sort of cross the room more.

We have a 'developmental morning', then the language and then the maths in the afternoon. Actually having maths in the afternoon was a big change. With the maths mostly being hands on, even if they're a bit tired still they can enjoy the afternoon; they're still playing games and doing things and cutting and making things. Before we changed we asked Kathy Treichel, the handwriting advisory teacher, who had taught in a multi-age year 1,2,3 classroom last year, about this and she said it had been successful for her so we thought we'd give it a try. She said it worked quite well but you had to be really organised and have everything ready.

Getting your groups ready for the morning, that's the hard part.

We've arranged all our specialist groups in the afternoon too; we deliberately did that so one teacher could be with the groups and the other in and out with the specialists. We felt that maths could put up with that more than the language because it's very hard if you are doing something very spontaneous with language and you lose it if you've suddenly got to drop it and go to library. In maths you can sort of go off and come back and pick it up again; language is so much more integrated.

In the language session we're using basically much the same approach as last year; we're using language experience and trying to do things together but we're finding it really hard at this stage. We're doing the Mt Gravatt and I'm at the beginning with the ones and Cris is on to level two with the twos and that's where we find it difficult, the year ones not being able to read, and not knowing all their sounds. We're now looking at what I'm doing with the twos and what Liz is doing with the ones and trying to plan some activities that we do together. Actually we succeeded this week. Liz did Pugsy and I did my drawing and brought a dog in. We put the language together. For my dog I did "d", and we did "sh" and we made a shaggy dog together, We all made dogs and we talked about dogs. That went quite well; they all did their process writing from that.

We probably don't do as much process writing as last year, except, we are probably doing more writing in the 'developmental morning'. We are trying to get them to write most mornings. It's associated with what they are doing there. The other sort of writing we are doing is what we tend to do on Friday, where we bring in everything we have been doing during the week.

We have 'CRAB' time at beginning of language. That stands for "Children Rave About Books". We did this last year at the same time, straight after little lunch, then we do story time. We started off having the whole group together reading the story from about ten past to half past but we found that the ones just couldn't listen at this stage. So we changed the program, and this was when Liz did her writing patterns and took the twos for a story. We're finding now maybe they should be coming back together because the ones can listen much better.

Friday is a catch up day; you need one each week. We catch up on language-arts and maths; and have a nice easy afternoon of integrated arts which we do all together.

UNIT 4 19/3/86
Jenny and Jan

As experienced Iowe school teachers who wished to continue teaching in this area of the school we agreed to be part of the project. We argued for a 1,2,3 grouping during the planning time but have a 1,2 this year and hope to have 1,2,3 next year. We would have preferred a 1,2,3 room to a 1,2 room because you have a smaller group of ones and the threes are more independent. Even our best twos this year are not very independent.

. . . . . .

We started off with the developmental morning every day which gave the ones the very early freedom they needed. We used much the same sorts of resources as we used last year and similar sorts of activities. The learning areas we planned were language, maths, sand, painting, collage, science and social studies. We had used learning centres before so didn't see any problems setting these up.

It worked very well every morning to have the children all activity based and moving around at leisure doing their own activities; we have two sections to the day; the morning session is a developmental time, where the children choose activities with guidance, while we do our individual reading, little reading groups etcetera, then after that we get a bit more formal and directed. And, we seem to keep running into difficulties.

All the children were new to us and we expected a nice continuum of children for which to plan developmental activities. Unfortunately we didn't quite get this. In those first weeks we tested out all the children, the ones and the twos on the one test [Holdaway's Informal Prose Inventory], and we found that one of the ones was an early reader, and the other ones were beginning readers. We found that 14 of our twos could only be classified as beginning readers. They didn't have the sight words though their letter knowledge and sound knowledge was quite satisfactory. What really cruelled it was that middle group; we didn't get the continuum that would have made it ungraded.

This meant that we had to turn around and stop everything. There were 14 that needed a sort of remedial program! So we had to abandon play and set up three teaching groups, the early readers, the group who needed a clearly sequenced, structured program and the ones who were at year two standard. Because of the special group of year twos we just couldn't afford the time for a full developmental morning. If we allowed those children to have a full developmental morning a third of your day was gone and it was too hard to fit in all of the other things.

Also, we have our specialist lessons for physical education and music on a Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday mornings and television on Fridays and this is difficult to organise with a free activities time. So we got down to having developmental activities for maybe a half hour on two days a week, Mondays and Fridays. We have maths and language in the middle session and social studies, art and music in the afternoon.

Next we found that we were becoming very separated. We said we wouldn't become two separate teachers but we did. We team-taught last year in a straight year two, but now we became separated. Even our CCP planning was separate. Up until last week we had all the year twos down one end of the room and first year at school down the other end and we did a few things together and a lot of things apart.

Now we're trying to set up mixed groups. We have the same learning centres and routine. The mixing of groups is different. The age levels have not been mixing and we want to break that down. Our worry though is that we don't want our twos to become ones or our ones to become twos before their time. The ones need a very special, careful supportive program and we are not that convinced that the twos are all that happy working alongside them. They haven't mixed well. Some do but usually they have known one another outside the school.

We are trying to work them together, and we are finding it extremely difficult. We've got them sitting in mixed groups, but very often if we want to do certain work most of the ones are out. We just don't get enough teaching time. In regards to that we are going to try to do a few whole group lessons. What we mean by the whole group is - all the first years and just a couple of second years do a lesson together. But we have no real place where we can sit at a desk and do this. We've got three areas where the children can sit on the carpet, one in front of a blackboard, the big area right in the centre of the room and one down in front of the easel, but no big area with desks.

We are not finding it an easy task of how to ensure each child is working at his/her appropriate level. Mainly we haven't got over this business of, are we ..child centred. We've still got this Department expectation of what the year ones are supposed to cover this year, what the year twos are supposed to cover and that's the big dilemma. Do we abandon the Department syllabuses? I don't know that personally I'm prepared to do that at this stage. I would be prepared to if I knew that I had the blessing of everybody but I don't think we do. The syllabuses are still coming out and they are not developmental. In the maths [we're a trial school and see the material], it's coming out as year ones cover this, and the year twos cover this. It's not coming out as a series of steps which children have to go through before they come to the next step; and that's what we really need. If I could have a curriculum where children went through .. sort of steps, that would suit this type of classroom.

We want to get more time for developmental activities. We hope to do this after Easter. We've made good progress in the basic work - maths is fairly solid, the twos are building up their sight vocabulary, and the ones have come ahead to meet them so we haven't got that great gap. This might be how it happens in a one/two grouping. It would be interesting to see if it would happen in a one/two/three room.

Learning centres are really important to the program. The children enjoy using them and they are used throughout the day when it's appropriate; like when a teacher is working with one group in a more directed way others work at individual tasks in the centres. We have found a few problems, however, using learning centres in a mixed age class. For instance, if it's the twos at the reading centre, we have very few ones going in; or if the ones are in there the twos don't go in. The groups don't mix for activities; they won't ever get a board game or play together.

We used learning centres with a single grade last year, and the displays were directed at exactly the right level. Now we have problems like - the year twos are using money, but the year ones can't give change for fifty cents. Setting up the handwriting centre you've got a whole series of things; how do you explain to some that they can't use some of the cards? If we had a straight grade now we'd say 'right today use the pre-writing cards; and the letters we had taught and practised; but now we have this mass of stuff. We can't supervise each child, you're not there over each child's shoulder to ensure he's doing appropriate activities.

We have some drastic decisions to make before Easter because we are frustrated with what is happening now. What we can't decide is - what are we going to do after this morning session? Are we going to have it very informal or .. well there are a lot of children who don't work very well independently and we worry about them; maybe our standards are too high ..

CHAPTER 3

CONSOLIDATION IS COMFORTING

BUT

THE IDEAL IS STILL ELUSIVE

April to June, second quarter

The main reasons for organising ungraded units are:

1. To cater for different developmental levels among children
2. To create a better balance between subject-matter concerns and individual child concerns
3. To stop early school failure
4. To encourage parent involvement.

Intended Outcomes:

- independent thinkers
- responsible pupils who share concerns and respect for others
- highly motivated learners who reach their fullest potential

[from the Leafy Wood State School Proposal for 'Early Years Units"]

UNIT 3

We're happy with it at the moment. That's how we used to work it last year. We had 4 groups of 10. Smaller groups work much better. On a certain day they complete a certain area. We've just gone back to that because we feel much happier with it, probably because we feel more in control. We know where the children are and they still have some choice. If they go to maths area the games are color coded, so the 'fish' (year ones) know they can play with the yellow ones; they can also go onto the other ones but they are to use those first.

UNIT 4

I guess if you make these changes you have to make them within what you can cope with yourself. It should not be somebody else's idea of what the ideal is. This is not a long, long way from a lot of things we were doing last year. Last year was quite nice because we only had straight twos and we could put up a list of things to be done today, say just ten things that had to be done today and then it was free time. We could start doing that now in here but we couldn't when the ones were so dependent at the beginning of the year.

UNIT 2

Diary entry, 10 April: More time given to language and maths - we feel children need more guidance in these areas. As much as we feel that self-direction by the children is one of the major objectives of education, we have given the children too much freedom from the start and they haven't been able to handle it . . It seems that the more we do, the more structure comes into our program.

Diary entry, 22 April: We visited the multi-age one/two room at Bardon for the middle session. This gave us re-assurance that what we are trying in our room is similar to their set up and that we are on the right track. We perhaps providing too many activities for children to complete. By cutting down on the number of activities this may mean less planning time and that would be terrific !!!

UNIT 1

There are some in between things I'm not sure about. I think I can visualise now how it would work out but there are still some very important steps in between. I'm just not sure when they are supposed to happen and what the process is. I probably won't find out until it has happened. That is what causes a lot of stress, that uncertainty . .

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS OF CHANGE - APRIL TO JUNE

The beginning of the second quarter generally seemed to be a period of consolidation for the teaching teams in each Unit. Modifications and refinements relating to the daily routine, the room arrangement, to grouping strategies and to procedures for organising for choice, were made to streamline changes made earlier in the year. No major change from the basic strategies decided upon at the beginning of the year was reported.

This period appeared to be comforting to teachers. They seemed to be coming to terms with the reality that transferring a curriculum ideal into day-to-day classroom practices was a slow and tentative business. The rush to implement an 'ideal' curriculum that responded to developmental differences among 45 children aged 5 and 6 years and that provided for the optimum amount of hands-on, active learning was now tempered by an acceptance that there were stages along the way. Teachers began to realise that skills associated with change took time to develop. The teaching teams in Units 3 and 4 took comfort in the fact that the skills and practices used in 1985 were working with the wider age-range. The team in Unit 3 had identified the need to develop further their skill in providing effectively for choice in the classroom. The teachers in Unit 1, new to the age level, had been developing skill in working with 5 and 6 year olds and was now ready to implement a 'developmental morning' along the lines used by the teaching team in Unit 3.

WHY CONSOLIDATION AND NOT FURTHER PRESS FOR CHANGE?
Reports from teachers during the April/May period suggest that the more relaxed attitude to pursuing change and to their current level of progress may have been associated with the following:

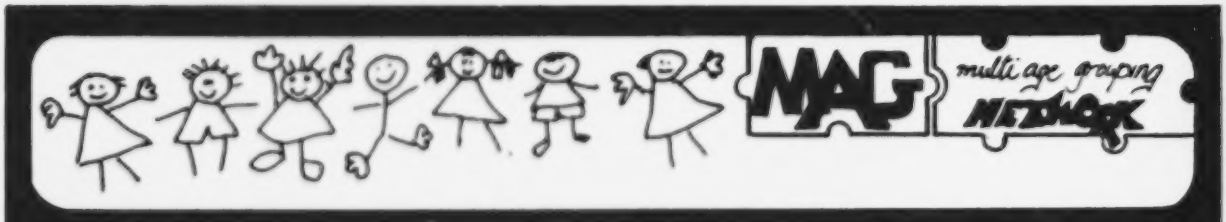
- The break at the end of the first quarter provided a time for reflection as well as for rest. Teachers did not want to continue to feel the level of anxiety they had been experiencing prior to the break.

- The children were showing no ill-effects from the changes, in terms of educational progress, and there were signs of additional desirable outcomes such as improved creativity in writing, co-operation among peers and independence in the classroom. These provided a degree of reassurance about the progress they were making.

- The inspector's visit was to be made during the sixth and seventh weeks of the quarter and this introduced a note of caution into considerations about change.

- The teachers began to make contact with teachers from other schools involved in similar change projects and were reassured to find that others also were unsure about translating the ideal into reality.

Interviews, 1 May: It's good to have a meeting to talk out the problems that we all have and how we feel too. I think they would like to know. Sometimes we feel that if we rock the boat too much we are going to get into trouble. I was talking to -- about this and she said that it is common for administrators, when there is change, to worry about how it is going. They want it to go well and sometimes they over-compensate. She said it just takes time.



Hello Everyone!
Remember our Network Meeting? 1st June 1986

. . it is so good to know that there are other people out there who have the same concerns, the same worries, the same frustrations, the same sort of needs ..

. . what I really liked was the day you came to our school. You looked around and you saw one of my corners that was just a mess, it really was that day. And you said, looking into the corner, 'you know we're really not that bad!' and I thought that was just fantastic. You said 'I feel so much better'. [much laughter]

. . I remember things that happened in our first year and then look at what is happening here. It will be interesting if you guys come to the same conclusion, even though we have different teaching backgrounds. I was an upper school teacher . .

. . and weren't you panicking in those days!

. . Oh yes; I nearly resigned!

. . we were panicking, we had nothing, just ourselves . .

. . we'd burst into tears at nothing too . .

[an explosion of relieved laughter and agreement about the level of anxiety at the beginning].

PARENT MEETING 30 April:

33 parents present, 24 female and 9 male.

Emphases made by teachers during the discussion held after the tour of the room -

invented spelling; the role of conferencing; giving lots of purposes forwriting;
learning as a 'power' thing, who ought to have the control;
responsibility and independence; self-learning;
social development and fine motor development;
monitoring by observing; anecdotal records; check-lists;
following the writing process caters for all levels, we don't have to plan different things for different ages.

WHAT DO OTHERS THINK?

The ideal that each teacher assumed existed about the style of curriculum necessary for a multi-age situation, however, continued to create a degree of *insecurity* among the teachers. While the concern they expressed could no longer be classed as 'anxiety' or 'stress', they continued to worry about what others might think - both about the perceptions of those whom they thought had expertise in implementing developmentally-based curriculum, and, about those whom they thought might not want this type of change in curriculum practice.

It was not so much identifiable events or people at this time, rather, it was a general concern that those with strong views about appropriate curriculum practice might be critical just when the teachers were vulnerable because they were in a period of transition.

With regard to the fear of criticism from the perspective of the espoused ideal, teachers tended to apologise to the investigator and to suggest that she might be privately judging their performance. They began to express a concern that the administration team might be finding their progress unsatisfactory and began to look for more direct reassurance of support for what they were doing. They felt that there were others 'out there' who were doing it correctly. The teacher network meetings did much to alleviate this particular concern, not only for these teachers at Leafy Wood but for other teachers involved in the first year of change as well. The segment on the opposite page is taken from the first network meeting and is indicative of the degree of feeling associated with this insecurity.

An equally powerful consideration for these teachers was the reaction of those who might not approve of, or understand, the type of change they were endeavouring to make. The reactions of parents of children enrolled in the Units were continually in the minds of teachers. Even though they had considerable day-to-day support from parents in the classroom it was the possibility of a group of dissenters that continued to keep the insecurity bubbling. The possibility of challenge from such parents also meant that teachers carefully monitored their own work and made sure that they were able to justify every change, however minute, that they made. Early in the quarter the teachers in Unit 2 called a parent meeting in their room to explain what they were doing, because they had heard that some parents were commenting on differences between what happened in their Unit and what happened in other Units.

The inspector was an unknown factor and therefore teachers figured that it was best to be fairly cautious about what they presented at the time of the visit. As one teacher commented this was not the time to be experimenting, it was the time to be very sure of proficiency in whatever practices were being used while the inspector was present.

WEEK	EVENTS	DATA COLLECTION
10 7 Apr		
11 14 Apr		
12 21 Apr	Meeting at Preschool some criticisms implied about multi-age grouping; Visit to Bardon SS by teachers from Unit 2	
13 28 April	Parent meeting in Unit 2; Teacher network meeting; Jenny to be absent on sick leave for six weeks;	Attendance at parent meeting Attendance at network meeting Interviews Units 1,2,3,4
14 5 May		
15 12 May		
16 19 May	ELIC starts - ten week course; Liz, Linda, Jan, Rhonda Ruth, Lena Third year students start; Inspection 23 - 27	
17 26 May		Observations in classrooms and incidental discussion with teachers during student supervision, 28,29,30
18 2 Jun	Mathematics meeting to plan an overview where year one and year two work are placed side by side;	
19 9 Jun	Meeting with administration team on 13 June to decide grouping plan for 1987; 1/2 groups to be continued.	Observations in classrooms and incidental discussion with teachers during student supervision, 11,12,13 Interviews Units 1,2,3,4.

The inspector is coming, the inspector is coming: When teachers were interviewed in May, four weeks into the quarter, each of them indicated that they were not intending to begin any new changes before the visit by the inspector. As it was put by the teachers in Unit 3:

> Now we want to go across the board and integrate the ones and twos for language and maths, but we're not prepared to do it before the inspector comes . . it's not wise. At the moment we can back up everything we are doing, we can cover everything quite well. It's not the time for experimenting.

As it turned out the inspectorial team that visited the school had very definite ideas of their own about the ideal for the curriculum in the early years of schooling and made suggestions to the teachers aimed at further change in the direction of more choice in the classroom and more integration of the year levels. While these suggestion created heartache for some teachers, they could all take comfort in the fact that the quality of what they were currently doing was not questioned and the inspectors were demonstrably in favour of the change under way. In fact the inspectors demonstrated their approval in a very practical sense by making a grant of $600.00 to be spent on resources for the project.

TIME FOR FURTHER CHANGE: The seventh week of this quarter provided a range of new inputs into decision-making about the classroom curriculum. The inspectorial team completed their inspection on the Tuesday, and gave encouragement towards further change. Teachers from all four Units began attending the Early Literacy Inservice Course, a ten week after-school Course which was being made available to administrators and all teachers throughout the Stateworking with children in preschool and years 1,2,3. Third year student teachers from the School of Early Childhood Studies began their four week practice teaching period, bringing with them some ideas about suitable activities for multi-ability groups.

These three sets of events appear to have provided an impetus towards further change in three of the Units. Unit 1 took advantage of the presence of the student teacher to try out mixed-age groups and multi-input activities in the language session. The favourable inspectors' report gave Unit 2 encouragement to investigate further the provision of choice. The E.L.I.C. workshops provided Unit 3 with some new strategies for monitoring individual progress in the classroom.

One of the teachers in Unit 4 was still absent on six weeks' sick leave and the remaining teacher reported that further decisions about change could not be made in her absence. During her absence the two year levels were mainly taught separately. It would seem that staff absences are an important factor in the change process in team teaching situations. In the third quarter one of the teachers in Unit 3 was absent for five weeks on long service leave and moves towards change were delayed in that Unit for the whole quarter. Similarly, when a teacher was absent at an inservice program in school time or away sick, the classroom tended to revert to sparate year levels while the relieving teacher was present.

GROUPING OF CHILDREN DURING THE SECOND QUARTER

SESSION	UNIT 1	UNIT 2	UNIT 3	UNIT 4
9.00 - 10.45	introduced 8 set groups, mixed age and ability 'developmental morning'	self-choice covering health social studies, art, science, music, listening, 'choosing time'	8 set groups, mixed age and ability 'developmental morning'	self-choice needs groups from time to time year level groups for specialists on three days a week
11.00 - 12.30	language tried 3 mixed-ability groups while student teacher on practice teaching; introduced a single theme for reading;	language whole group focusing activity then individual work; one teacher responsible for each year level;	language separate year level groups; introduction of a single theme for both reading groups;	language and maths year level groups for handwriting and other lessons; ability groups for reading and mathematics;
1.30 - 3.00	mathematics year level groups and ability groups one teacher responsible for each year level;	mathematics year level groups and ability groups one teacher responsible for each year level;	mathematics year level groups and ability groups one teacher responsible for each year level; specialist teachers in this session;	language and maths as for previous session one teacher responsible for each year level;

CONSOLIDATING THE EARLIER CHANGES

Areas of decision-making that had presented problems for some teachers in the first quarter now became more routine in nature. The use of learning centres, for instance, was institutionalised in all classrooms (though the style of centre varied according to teacher philosophy), and were used predominantly during the first session each day. Unit 2 had used them more extensively but now made changes which brought them closer to the norm established by the other Units.

In all Units the daily timetable became more similar. All Units now had an activity-based morning session, with the activities promoting learning in social studies, science, health, art, some aspects of language and mathematics, and in Unit 4 a music centre was established. Language learning was the major focus in the middle session and mathematices in the afternoon. Mathematics in the third session of the day was an idea that had been imported from Bardon State School. Ideas from other schools within the Region could be identified in many aspects of the room arrangement and daily routine. This school in turn became a source of ideas for others once the teacher network was established.

In all Units the number of comments made about monitoring what children did in the classroom tapered off in the early part of this quarter. It seemed that strategies such as contracts and check-lists on the wall which had been introduced along with increased choice had not proved efficient in terms of time utilisation. However teachers now knew each child better and children knew the routine better so the need for monitoring strategies was not so pressing. However, later in the quarter once teachers began attending the E.L.I.C. workshops interest in this area was revived.

> *June 13* : We feel it is not as important to monitor where and what the children are doing as how they're doing it in that choice time. We were thinking we had to monitor everything, where they were, what they were doing. Now we give them the choice and that's their choice . . maybe choosing half a dozen children at a time and watching them go through a morning session . . rather than trying to keep this check, which the children weren't really about to do at this stage. It was becoming a chore . . it was wasted energy and wasted time. Every activity we are offering has some value so you rely on the quality of the activity.

> *June 13* : Well after doing E.L.I.C. I said to Chris, with the running records I want to do all the children who are really good readers, and push them . .

While teachers were no longer highly anxious about a perceived dilemma created by demands that they 'cover' content and demands that they respond to individual differences, comments continued to be made about the difficulties of balancing two sets of expectations.

Unit 4: We had a big talk to Graham on the last day of last term and he said not to worry so much about following the year levels in the syllabuses but to work on trying to get reading and writing into the classroom, so we have. We are not saying we are going to do science every week, we are going to do social studies every week. We are just gradually trying to build up themes going on in the room, next week we are doing a science theme but we are not trying to get everything in. Over the year we are trying to get a nice balance.

We didn't have any guidelines when we started this. I know that is considered a plus by a lot of people but I felt we needed a clearer gudeline about whether we had to follow the curriculum and so on. We've been told a lot over the years, you must do this, you must do that, and then someone tells you you are stupid to think that, it went out years ago . . but we are not completely autonomous ..

Unit 1 June 13: The paragraph I showed Linda about this goal of independence comes out of that P.E.T.A. book (Getting It Together) and it was something to the effect that we have to put away the traditional ideas of content. I said to Ruth that I want to do more content than that. I'm not just going to say content doesn't matter. Even with choice occasionally it is content and choice.

Diary entry April 8: We have repeatedly mentioned to each other, simce the first couple of weeks of school in fact, that multi-age grouping is extremely difficult with (a) a set curriculum (b) numbers of children up to 45 especially with half of them new to school, and (c) monitoring learning in the curriculum areas.

The Role of the Parent Program: The Assistant Principal continued, throughout this quarter to provide an extensive parent education and information program. In May, for instance, at the parent meeting held in Unit 2 she had a big poster on the wall and took a little time to explain to parents that the workshops being offered had been selected because they provided information in areas that parents had indicated they wanted to know more. Workshops advertised on the poster were:

- handwriting - the beginners alphabet

  Kathy T-

- process writing - children recording thoughts and expression

  Di van D-

- process writing - spelling and its place in a writing program

  Jan C-

- reading: introduction to the reading programs

  Sue S-

- reading in a multi-age classroom

  Joy S-

The poster also advertised the Reading Development Centre at Kelvin Grove, suggesting parents attend workshops there.

In each Unit teacher attempts to bring the ideal and reality into alignment were tempered by each teacher's own educational philosophy and teaching strengths. The different concerns in each Unit are briefly addressed in the next few pages.

Developmental Activities 9.30-10.15
Mon - Thurs

The children will be directed in small groups to complete activities in the following areas.

Science. - Activities based on theme related work.

Art + Craft. - Theme related Art and Craft activities

Language - Listening Story on tape related to theme. Children will listen for specific purposes then respond in writing or by the use of art materials.

Language Felt Board stories related to theme work.
- Parent Helper.

Language Puzzles and Game Activities

Maths. Activity based group activity changed to suit particular skills and processes necessary to particular groups and individual.

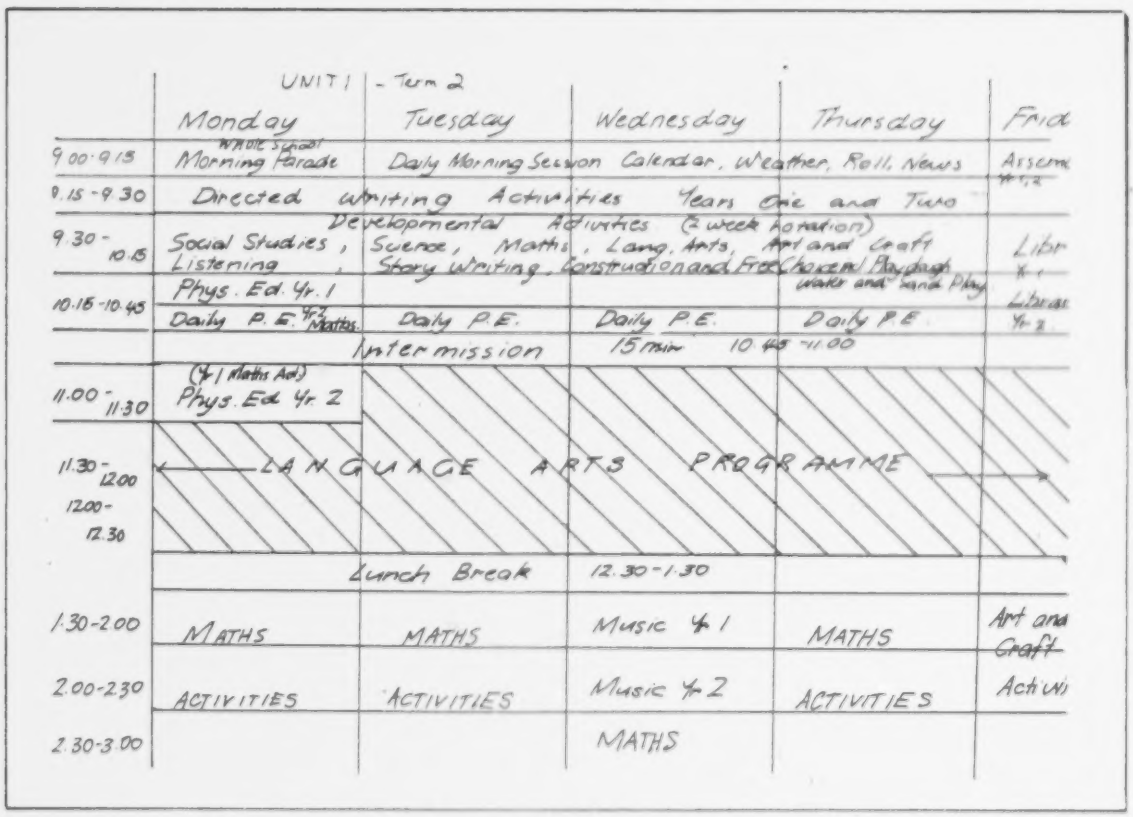
Free Choice Activities. The children will choose from a range of free play and construction materials including Play dough, Painting, Blocks, Shopping, Water Play, Sand play, Lego, Duplo. Puzzles. -Chn respond in writing to their chosen Activity

Social Studies - Teacher directed activities related to integrated unit. Small group work.

Evaluation - Children respond to their activities in booklets by writing and illustrating on completion of their work.

UNIT 1

The teaching team in Unit 1 now felt more at home with five and six year olds and had learned some of the techniques for working in a double teaching space. As a result changes were made to the time-table and room arrangement to bring the program more into line with what was happening in other Units. Unit 1 now had a 'developmental time' during the first session, operating it along similar lines to that used by Unit 3. This meant they used 8 set groups of mixed year one and year two children in session 1, and rotated the groups around the activities planned for a fortnight. Session 2 was unchanged, a language session, and the afternoon session was devoted to mathematics. No intentions to make changes to the style of activity provided in sessions 2 and 3 were reported at the beginning of the quarter.



UNIT 1 - Term 2

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Frid
9.00-9.15	Morning Parade (WHOLE SCHOOL)	Daily Morning Session Calendar, Weather, Roll, News			Assem Yr 1, 2
9.15-9.30	Directed Writing Activities Years One and Two				
9.30-10.15	Social Studies, Listening,	Developmental Activities (2 week rotation) Science, Maths, Lang. Arts, Art and Craft Story Writing, Construction and Free Choice/ Playdough Water and Sand Play			Libr Yr 1
10.15-10.45	Phys. Ed. Yr. 1 Daily P.E. Yr 2 Maths	Daily P.E.	Daily P.E.	Daily P.E.	Librar Yr 2
		Intermission	15 min 10.45-11.00		
11.00-11.30	(Yr 1 Maths Act) Phys. Ed Yr 2	LANGUAGE ARTS PROGRAMME			
11.30-12.00					
12.00-12.30					
		Lunch Break	12.30-1.30		
1.30-2.00	MATHS	MATHS	Music Yr 1	MATHS	Art and Craft
2.00-2.30	ACTIVITIES	ACTIVITIES	Music Yr 2	ACTIVITIES	Activi
2.30-3.00			MATHS		

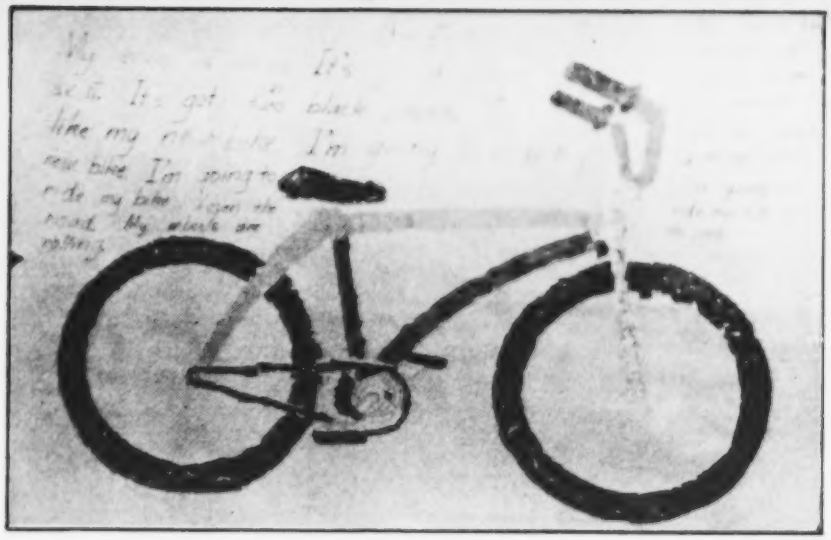
UNIT 2

At the beginning of the year the teaching team in Unit 2 had given priority to the provision of choice for children, throughout the day. Children were encouraged to choose from a selection of activities, to choose who they would work with and the amount of time to spend on an activity. This meant that the teachers spend considerable time devising ways of keeping track of what children were doing. They had not been entirely happy with their efforts in this area, though they used anecdotal records, check-lists and observations and encouraged children to take some responsibility for this themselves through the use of contracts and wall displays which children ticked when they had completed an activity.

Now the team decided to place more limits on the availability of choice. The reasons advanced for this included a concern that they had not prepared children properly in the first place and some children had not learned how to manage their own time effectively; parents noted too many differences between their Unit and the others; the impending visit by the inspector to do their second year inspection made them a little insecure about being different; and, they were concerned that they might not have been covering enough mathematics with the year two children.

By the end of the quarter, however, the team was ready to press forward with the provision of choice in the classroom as the following quotes from diary entries and interview transcripts indicate:

> *Diary entry 10 April*: As much as we feel that self-direction .. is one of the major objectives of education, we have given the children too much freedom from the start, and they haven't been able to handle it. They have to learn to cope with this freedom as much as anything else. It seems the further we go along the more structure comes into our program..
> *Diary entry 23 April*: Maths just isn't being covered with so much free choice time. So once again we change our timetable. Beginning next week we have content areas of art, health, listening, music, science and social studies in the morning, language in the middle and maths in the afternoon.
> *Interview 30 April*: I feel really quite guilty about giving away so much choice; it's not the right thing, they should be having that choice in the mornings.
> *Diary entry 12 May*: The format is OK and is functioning smoothly, however, we feel it is too structured - not fostering multi-age grouping or achieving our goals.
> *Diary entry 22 May*: The children are now used to the routine and with our inspection imminent, we will continue this way probably until the end of term.
> *Diary entry 28 May*: Now this inspection is over we've got to get more choice .. . In retrospect we went about it the wrong way at first. We didn't get the children prepared enough, we didn't ease them into the room ..
> *Diary entry 12 June*: The coming of the new semester will once again see change in Unit 2. This time we will 'unstructure' our format. We will be working toward activities that will involve the whole group where the children can work at their own levels rather than virtually splitting years one and two. Grouping is becoming more obvious now, some year ones and twos could be working at similar levels. Also we are going to concentrate on language and maths this term, and not fit so much into the curriculum - rather let the curriculum fit into what we are doing. With such a busy term just passed, we think the children need more time in these areas.



We're trying a combined activity this afternoon, related to the 'bike' theme from the Mt Gravatt scheme. Liz has been doing 'my bike' and I have been doing 'my aeroplane'. We are having a 'bike day' today. We think that we might start doing one of the year one themes from the Mt Gravatt for the whole unit, then one of the year two units.

Later on when we are probably a bit more settled, we are going to have another look at the Mt Gravatt and see if we can teach some of the themes this year to the ones and twos and next year do the others we haven't touched. If we do a year two theme we will just teach the signalling units and just a few nouns and basically make up our own language and stories.

UNIT 3

The team in Unit 3 had, earlier in the year, reverted to some of the practices they had used successfully in 1985 when they taught together with year one children. During the 'development morning', for instance, they were now using a rotation system where set groups of children rotated around the 8 centres in the room. In one centre a free choice of activity was provided. They felt comfortable about their use of time though they continued to experiment with modifications to the way that the space was being organised:

> Diary entry 12 April: re-organised room for better use of magnetic board which was not being used to the best advantage of the year ones; totally changed ends; swapped year one and year two desks; changed teacher's tables; took us to 5.30 on Friday afternoon.
> Diary entry 18 April: re-organisation proved successful. Areas for developmental morning were better placed and room seemd to work better - areas were more defined and easier for supervision - the large centre area is always clear so the children can come together for sharing while the other areas are cleaned up.

Though they were happy to continue using strategies that had worked for them in 1985, the teachers were finding that the style of planning previously used for language was not entirely satisfactory in a multi-age situation. While they had no intention of making any major changes before the inspection they were ready to modify slightly the way they had planned previously:

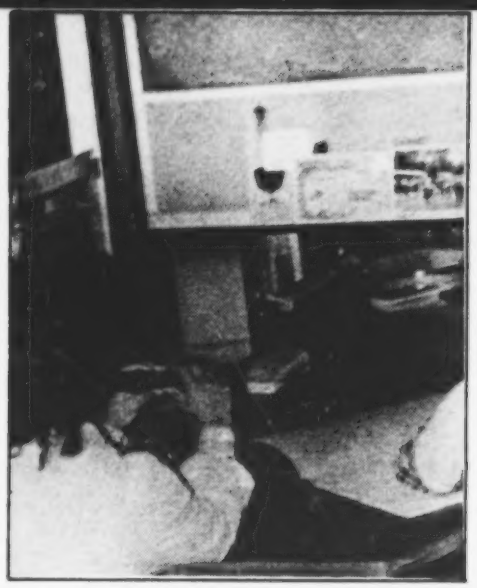
> Actually we are using all the stencils for maths and language that we used last year. We are looking at them and working out how we can use them in this room now that we want to integrate the ones and twos more.

> We have tried to do things together, but we are having a problem that the Mt Gravatt themes don't fit as well then. Really the themes for year one and year two are very, very different. That is why we decided to do themes across the board, make a note and then remember next year we have done this.

Another area of concern in this Unit early in the quarter was the amount of interruptions they experienced. This seemed to be a function of the outgoing, helpful nature of the teachers, the open communication they encouraged with student teachers, parents and community helpers, and, the considerable energy they put into cross-Unit planning.

> Diary entry 1 May: Too many interruptions; too many people coming in the morning; developmental mornings have started too late due to interruptions; have little time in the mornings to talk with children.
> Interview 1 May: The other big change is we've re-organised our planning. We are now planning with Unit 1 . . but it's getting rather complicated, because Liz and Helen do the language for Year 1 and Linda and I do it for Year 2, we also do the maths side and then we swap over . . Liz and I are finding we have no time together though we work very well together because we have done the themes before . .

Themes were used extensively in Unit 4 though here the themes were not the basis of the reading program. Rather themes were introduced as a focal point for a week or so then the materials assembled for the theme were put together in a learning centre where children could continue to explore.



Some children, as soon as an area is set up, race over to that area and within two days are bored with it; other children wait until everyone has done it and they have watched everyone. After you've talked about it thousands of times and they feel confident, then you'll notice them walk into the area and sit down all by themselves and look around. Maybe they need that big build up of knowledge before they can come to an actual centre and get anything out of it. There are a significant number like this, that's why we don't want to pack up centres and put them away.

UNIT 4

Unit 4 began the quarter by re-arranging the room so that there was one set of desks for 23 children facing the blackboard, spaces for large groups on the carpet and learning centres where small groups could work. They had found that there was no need for two sets of desks facing a blackboard. Like the other teachers they reported that group work at desks was only necessary for handwriting. In this room, while one group had a handwriting lesson the other group sat on the carpet or in the withdrawal room to work on tasks set by the teacher or for a teacher directed lesson..

> Interview 1 May: We had the two ends before; we haven't got that at all now. This end tends to have all the desks facing the board for when we are doing writing. It would be nice to say that the kids can just turn their desks and just write. In fact though, you say - your writing lesson is starting now - and, we find that most of the twos and ones have to have a lesson at the same time, preferably just to get it out of the way. I'll take all the twos and we will do a handwriting lesson while Jan's doing something alse and then she will come for handwriting while I'll do something elase. There are enough desks for 23 children but it is sometimes used by ones and sometimes by twos.

The team continued, in this quarter, to worry about how to match syllabus expectations and differences in child ability. Their basic strategy for solving the dilemma was to test children as a basis for deciding groups. They had formed three groups for reading on the basis of diagnostic testing and now moved to determine groups for mathematics:

> We tested all the children individually, their knowledge of number. A lot of their developmental activities are mathematical activities so a lot of the special work is done in that time. We now have a half hour period a day where we do a lot of number work and that is just based on a test of every child's knowledge of number. We put them in appropriate groups and we do exactly the next step that they are ready for, it makes no difference whether they are ones or twos. It's worked very well except some of our ones have finished their maths up to grade three standard and some of the year twos have been struggling to finish. The twos had shocking maths. Doing it like this we cut down on the number of main activities that we provide because we are directing more successfully to what the group needs and you can do tons of enrichment activities while you are still extending each individual child. The other way you are trying to follow the curriculum and a lot of children aren't fitting in, some way ahead and some way behind.
>
> In fact we have been quite slow in getting our diagnostic testing done for maths but we have now completed the ones. That makes our maths a lot more efficient. We know exactly what the children can do, where they are in their mathematical development, which we haven't really known.
>
> Testing is mainly in number, their knowledge of the number system, how they use number facts, if they've got a visual memory for number facts or whether they are just straight counting. Whether they can see 7 or 8 objects without counting them all the time; three objects, whether they can see equivalent sets, whether they can see sets that are bigger, more than, less than, and terminology. At the same time as testing we can scrub up their terminology because we are taking them individually . .
>
> We are very noisy in here, that worries me. With kids moving around all the time it is noisy. Somethimes I wish we had lots more formal lessons where everyone is sitting. Some days we say 'let's have a formal day today'. Oh the comfort of it.

EMERGING ISSUES

The issue of how to group children effectively continued to be a major one for all the teachers throughout the year. As this second quarter progressed and teachers began to find ways to integrate year one and year two children more skilfully new issues affecting classroom practice or teacher decision-making about that practice emerged. These issues included the grouping policies of specialist teachers in the school, procedures for planning, the provision of choice, styles of activity suitable for multi-ability groups and the language session.

Specialist teachers: The specialist teachers for library, music and physical education still insisted on taking children by year level and this meant that children had to be organised for specialist time-slots by year levels even when this was becoming less necessary in the rest of a session. Some Units solved the problem by arranging specialist times in the afternoon when children were usually grouped by year level for mathematics.

> We got a message at 1.30 p.m. to say no music that the time had been changed permanently, they just expect you to fit in . . and we deliberately made all our specialist time for Thursday afternoon so we wouldn't interrupt our other sessions . . we're beginning to feel we don't have any control over what is happening.
>
> Some specialist teachers can't see a way of using the two age groups together even in a mixed group of the normal size, with regard to the skills they expect the children to develop by the end of the first year. As the second year group is able to do more than the ones they don't want to spend time teaching one group and sending the other group off.
>
> The inspector was in the room when we were getting ready for library time and she saw all the ones lining up at the door and the twos lining up, and she said why aren't they all graded together? She had a fit . .

Team planning: Early in the year some Units had begun a system of cross-Unit planning to lessen the work-load in preparing a language theme for a year level, social studies or science for a year level, or a set of multi-level activities for the developmental morning. As the quarter progressed it was felt that the time spent on preparing for one year-level across Units was counter productive. It cut down on time for planning within the Unit and cut across the growing ability to cater for children across the two year levels. Teachers began to find that they could use one theme, one topic, one activity for both year levels. Across Unit planning still had a place at this stage in planning for the developmental morning, and for planning overviews for a subject area such as mathematics or social studies. Attempts were made to develop strategies for planning overviews that helped get a more integrated year one/two.

> *May 1*: The other big change we have done is, we're re-organising our planning. We are now planning with Unit1; as you commented they were doing the bike theme too. They're doing Mt Gravatt too, so we planned across the board. It is getting rather complicated though because Liz and Helen do the language for year one and Linda and I do it for year two. We also do the maths side but then we swap for social studies and science.

By the time we sit down and organise this one then that one ... Liz and I find we have no time to plan within the Unit. Yet we work very well together and we're slowing down so much.

June 13: Now we plan within the Unit first, then talk to Helen and Linda about it. This works much better, as we are still able to share resources across the Units for session 1. What we do is, the students and Chris (relieving teacher) and I do our own thing; we communicate really well. We work out the group activities and the rotations, then we talked to Linda and Helen and pool our resources. We haven't been sharing across the units about language so much. We found that we should look at the language that we have got and adapt it more to our own children.

June 13 : We found the developmental morning with the four of us planning, that was much easier. There wasn't so much workload on us, but with the language we found we should look at the language that we have got and adapt it more to our own children.

June 13 : We were experiencing a lot of confusion over the new maths program . We found we were working from the computer printout they supplied, plus these individual activity books, plus the other resource books we already used and it was taking far too long to plan a program. It was very confusing and everyone was disappointed with it. So we got together the last few weeks. Margaret, the mathematics advisory teacher who is trialling material out this school, came out. The teachers dealing with year one maths got together and laid out a plan for the third and fourth terms and the people who would deal with the year twos did the same thing. They tried to put year one and two side by side to make it easier for planning multi-age grouping.

Written planning - the CCP: As the quarter progressed teachers began to comment on difficulties associated with writing plans for a multi-age group.

Unit 2: We have changed our CCP quite a lot to fit what we do in our room. Initially last year the teacher and I were both first year so we were really insecure. There were three first year teachers and a teacher who had never taught year one and we were pretty much guided about what others did and advice from the Assistant Principal. For language this tended to mean themes from one reading scheme and I had been trained to build the reading program from the child's own language. Ifound it hard to cope with that way of planning for language learning, deciding on a vocabulary and putting the children through. I wanted to start with the child's natural language. So we talked with Ruth and showed her what we wanted to do, writing more about strategies and ways of catering for children. We all kept monitoring what was happening over a period of time and saw that it wasn't that bad, it wasn't harmful. Now we have started to ease into that way of writing the CCP, focusing more on the strategies we intend to use and how we will go about monitoring children and a bit less on content to cover.

Unit 4: We have had a lot of difficulty deciding how to write a CCP, when we have a lot of children doing an individualised type of program. Now our CCP is done more in broad outlines of what is being covered and we use a weekly programmer where we put in what has been covered. We review our weekly programmer to see what time we have given to different subject areas to make sure we get an even program throughout the year. That's working very successfully and that helps us decide what unit or theme work we will do. We might decide on a language theme, a music theme, a maths theme. We always put a theme time on each day for half an hour. We start with the whole group and break into smaller groups. It's a very formal theme time.

Choice: The issue of how to provide choice in the curriculum and how much choice to provide became an issue later in this quarter. At this stage teachers indicated that as they looked more closely at the idea of choice they were more uncertain about what it meant to provide for choice.

> We really don't have a lot of free choice time. There is a free choice activity within the eight activity groups and occasionally that free choice activity is directed into specific areas. So it is not 'choice' so much as an activity.

> We found with choosing that we had too many children who just wouldn't do anything. I'd like to give more choice but first we have to get them more independent . .

> I think you still have to offer choice within the school too. There are some children where a straight, direct approach might be better. We know some in this school who would be better in that situation.

In Unit 2, for reasons mentioned earlier in the Chapter, less choice than in the previous quarter was offered at the beginning of the quarter but the teachers felt unhappy about this as the weeks passed. After a favourable response from the inspectorial team they looked again at strategies for providing children with choice about which activities to select, when to select them and who to work with.

Two sets of influence seemed to make choice an issue in the other Units - the Early Literacy Inservice Course (E.L.I.C.) which four of the teachers were attending, and, the visit by the inspectors.

For the teachers in Unit 1, E.L.I.C. highlighted the importance of choice in a program that responded to developmental differences and they began to examine how to introduce more choice into their program.

> The more I read the more it becomes obvious that that's the way to individualise learning, where they have a choice and they follow what they want to and they learn through that . . I have been reading the PETA book *Getting It All Together* and I think that it has a lot of good practical ideas for application of that choice. . . So I think there will be changes coming later in the year towards that goal.

The visit by the inspectorial team led to a much less favourable response to the issue of 'choice' by the teachers in Unit 3. The inspectors had suggested that there could be more choice if the rotation of activites in the morning were changed to a self-selction of activities. The teachers did not appreciate these comments which they took to be a criticism of their teaching ability.

> She gave us suggestions . . with opening up our room more and having four groups of ten instead of our own groups, and not being directed as we are and having one of us free to wander around and observe and we felt we're flat out at the moment as we are. We thought how are we going to do it. She said it should be more child-centred and not to worry too much about a lot of things that we still worry about . . but that takes time. I suppose you could say that we are still hung up . .

Multi-input activities: During this quarter most of the teachers mentioned that they were looking more closely at the style of activity they favoured for the multi-age situation. Some mentioned that they now favoured 'broad' focusing activities for a large group of children and then lots of related activities either specially selected to match a need, or, a range of activities that children could select from according to their interests. That is, the teachers felt that it would work better to have fewer activities going on at the one time, but that the activities provided ought to be capable of promoting learing among children of different ability levels.

> In developmental time with choosing a part of it, we are trying to find more of those sorts of activities where within the activity there is lots of range for all the children, from those children at the lowest end to the children at the other and we are starting to feel that's where they are helping each other.
>
> We did the last three weeks together, using the spider and ant themes. We do a focusing activity for everyone then they go off and do writing and cards and so on.
>
> We're getting to the stage where we can start off a maths activity with the whole class and then drop ability groups out for related activities. That has cut down on the number of special lessons we have to provide. Though to extend each individual child there are tons of enrichment activities needed.

Language learning and teaching: The organisation of the language session began to be questioned during this quarter in most Units even before teachers began attending the E.L.I.C. workshops. Teachers now appeared to want to look at strategies for implementing a language program that cut across the two separate year levels.

> We are looking at doing our own reading themes next Semester . .

They were, then, ready to respond with enthusiasm to what was presented in the workshops.

> 1 May: With that E.L.I.C. program I was talking to a girl who has done it and she said that they were very anti-Mt Gravatt. They like Story Box. But you have to go on what is available in the school.
>
> 13 June: I was talking to Helen this morning about what I've been doing in the E.L.I.C. program. I feel I'm learning some things that will be useful, like as part of our homework we have to try using running records.
>
> 13 June: I feel good after E.L.I.C. Jan Eccles, myself and others are saying that it gells well with what we are trying to do. I was talking to a girl who has a one/two over the other side of town and she said when you do the E.L.I.C. workshops it is just so easy, you really understand what you are doing. So E.L.I.C. is the right sort of inservice for us.

The quarter finished on an optimistic note. All parents appeared to be accepting the changes made, the inspectorial visit had been a success, the third year students who had spent the last month at the school had contributed to the development of strategies for mixing the age-groups, and most teachers felt confident about continuing in the project. On the last day of Semester One of the school year, Friday 13 June, an after school meeting was held to discuss multi-age grouping policy for 1987. The investigator was not present at the meeting but during the interviews held earlier in the day, two of the teaching teams mentioned the meeting and indicated their preferences:

> Unit 2: We'll be happy to do this sort of thing next year, we're keen to keep going. A lot of people would rather have just straight classes, but we would be quite happy to experiment with a 1,2,3.

> Unit 3: I don't want a 1,2,3. We feel we're coping with the 1,2 and next year we can do more in the earlier part because we feel more confident. I'd rather that than a total change again. I feel we might go backwards. We have been going through a stage where we thought we weren't competent teachers. That's how we felt after the inspector questioning what we were doing. After fifteen years of teaching we felt we were wasting our time. . . I was thinking this morning it must be harder for me because I'v taught for so long in the same situation. It is probably a lot easier for Jan and Rhonda because that is all they have known.

CHAPTER 4

FACILITATING THE LEARNING PROCESS

CHILD CHOICE AND TEACHER CONTROL

July to September, third quarter

With a philosophy involving flexibility and the movement of children within the language-arts time it is inevitable that you need a lot more hands-on equipment and additional audio material, material that would not have been as essential in a more traditional classroom. If you are going to have smaller groups of children obviously you are going to rotate them through the materials or rotate the materials whichever way the teachers do it, or have them there as choice materials. So instead of putting sets of materials into each classroom we put materials into teaching blocks so that they share between Units . . the more that you allow children choices and allow teachers to use the materials that they are really happy with and really excited about . . the greater the demand for acquiring more and more resources.

Assistant Principal 26.8.86

Unit 1: We don't have a strict rotational activity morning with eight groups any longer, partly because all of the children didn't need to do all those things and that led to some restlessness. The rotation was causing some of it because they would say, 'oh no, do we have to do this' .. it was just wrong for them and it created discipline type problems.

Now we have three main groups of children, and these can divide into six when we want smaller groups with parents. One group of 15 works with one teacher either on science or social studies, and we have different types of activities for the rest. There are two activities which all children must do each week, and sometimes we assign special tasks for some children. They select for themselves from the rest.

To explain the 'must do' activities one of us will get them organised on the carpet (the two groups of 15 while the other group is outside or in the withdrawal room), and explain which are the 'must do' activities, so they realise that over Tuesday, Wednesday or Thursday they must do these; This week they will have to do some cooking and they will have to do a written advertisement for displaying over there as part of our transport theme.

The teacher working with the two groups tries to make sure that she is not totally committed to any group for an activity so as to observe more carefully what children are doing and where they need help. We are using parent helpers and aides to be responsible for smaller groups of children.

Unit 4: We've gone more into Holdaway's levels of reading and use these as our guide to teaching reading. We used Holdaway to some extent last year but now we have tested using his levels and we use the levels to know what we are doing, where we are going and what we have covered. In the maths all the children do the same initial tests and when we sort them into groups they work at their own level. We have only four children now in the early number group and they are progressing really well. One of our parents is an ex-teacher and she comes for an hour each week to give them individualised teaching in early number.

UNIT 2: With this key card system we are coding all our books by colour, red, green and yellow dots, easy, medium and harder. The children can go to any book with a red dot if they are in the red dot group, for instance. When they have read the book to us they get a keyring and they write in the name of the book and the author, and then they have a whole range of possible responses they can make. We talk about the sorts of responses with them. There are also these sheets which we took out of a book, of responses to literature, again graded. For Caroline here, she had little pictures to mark to give her message about the story she read. Some responses are pictorial, at the next level they are written and later we expect more detail, we look at how they write about the characters and so on.

This is our latest effort in providing order in our choosing times, this notice-board. It is like a focus for the kids to come back to. In the past they really didn't have something to go to to jog their memory, so rather than have that recording thing we tried before we thought we would just have somewhere where they can come and look. If we say to them,'what are you doing' and they say, 'I'm not sure', we try to make them leave this spot with what they are going to do in mind. If they forget they can just come back. We try to make it simple enough for the littlies. Even if they can't read all the words they can just interpret the symbols. Some of the symbols and signs will change every couple of weeks some will be constant. Theme type things like 'family portraits' will change, but cooking won't.

In this third quarter of the school year issues related to the provision of choice in classrooms were frequently mentioned. The issues were to do with what constituted choice, when to offer it, how much was appropriate and how to change teacher 'habits' or skills which had been built up over many years of teaching. Teachers were not debating whether children ought to have a choice. Most seemed to have accepted, at a philosophic level, that it was legitimate to allow children some choice about what they did in the classroom, if they were implementing a 'developmentally-appropriate' curriculum approach. They were concerned, however, about how to provide for choice within contexts where they accepted that teachers were responsible for ensuring that children achieved at levels expected by the community.

In dealing with the issue of establishing effective ways for providing for choice, each teaching team took actions which were indicative of their current beliefs and teaching skills (or *habits* as one teacher called the style of interaction she used with children and was finding hard to change.)

The teachers in Unit 1 had spent considerable time in the last quarter reading about and debating how to achieve a balance between giving choice to children and ensuring that a satisfactory amount of work was covered. Now they began to try out strategies for achieving a balance in their classroom. In the morning session the major change was to abandon the rotation strategy on the grounds that it cut across the child's effective use of time. In the language session themes were now planned very broadly and the development of ideas and activities related to them took their cue from child responses.

Early in the year the teachers in Unit 4 had adopted a different strategy from those being trialled in the other Units, for responding to individual differences among children. These teachers had worked to create a program of individualised instruction, by testing each child's current levels of attainment in reading and mathematics, grouping children according to attainment, and then sequenced their program of instruction to cater for these groups. Coded materials were available throughout the day during 'free time' to ensure that children chose activities suitable for their designated level of ability. The general strategy used this year was one the teachers had used with a double year two in 1985 and they were continuing in this quarter to examine how applicable the strategy was for individualising instruction in a multi-age situation.

The Unit 2 teachers were becoming more skilled in knowing which strategies were likely to work for them, whereas earlier in the year they tried and abandoned a variety of strategies as they attempted to achieve a satisfactory balance between ensuring that children gained expected competencies and nurturing their independence in thinking. They now began to establish sets of coded material in some learning centres and encouraged children to work through the material at their own pace. They introduced a notice board which was used each morning to remind children about the choices available to them.

UNIT 3: Now when we have a theme it is for the whole class and this is working really well. And we use different reading material too. We still use Mt Gravatt but we also use Story Box and the new Book Shelf which we love, because it is so practical. We have just done a whole thing on Goldilocks, the shared book; and then the children adapted 'when Goldilocks went to' and made a book called 'when the gorillas went to . . ' We do a lot of adapting ideas from the books and they build their vocabulary that way as well as thinking creatively.

We have got into the spelling approach where we go around and pick up words as they are writing. I'm finding out from the children the common spelling mistakes and getting them to actually tell us, like when they think they have three letters right or noticing that some of the letters are in the wrong order. The children are enjoying fixing up their own mistakes.

EARLY LITERACY INSERVICE COURSE

The language program is just building on what we did last year. E.L.I.C. hasn't influenced us as much as it might have promised because that is the way we work now. It is reinforcing what we already know, which is beaut, it makes us feel good.

Other people are also having problems and feeling hesitant; we did writing, analysing the writing and we all found it hard, it just wasn't us - though we could see the benefit in it which was good.

In Unit 3 the teachers were exploring teaching approaches in the language session which responded more specifically to what children currently knew and could do. Vocabulary was not longer preselected from the Mt Gravatt reading material, but also taken from the children's responses to the theme used for both groups in the language session. Quota spelling had been introduced alongside the invented spelling approach so that children now had more control over the pacing of their spelling program and were helped to become more able to identify spelling errors in their own creative writing.

There appear to have been numerous possible reasons why, in this quarter, teachers generally focused more attention on strategies related to balancing child choice and teacher control of the learning process.

An obvious one was the E.L.I.C. program where teaching/learning approaches that responded to and built on current child interests and abilities were promoted. This program, though, would not have influenced the teachers to any significant extent unless the general philosophy fitted in with what the teachers were aiming to do anyway. As it happened this was the case. The rationale for starting the project at Leafy Wood had included an intent to cater for different developmental levels among children, to create a better balance between subject-matter concerns and individual child concerns, and to promote independent thinking. (see pages 31-32) In most Units teachers still did not consider that they had developed a suitable set of strategies to promote these goals and were ready to trial ideas they encountered at the inservice program.

Other possible influences include the inspector who was highly supportive of giving more opportunities for children to choose; teacher network meetings where it was evident that other teachers were also taking the matter of balancing choice and control seriously but were still tentative about how to do it; reading material from the Department of Education, the problem-solving booklets for instance, which indicated that giving children more control over learning situations was effective; and, the attention given to the issue throughout the year by the teachers in Unit 2 probably had some influence on others.

Another issue, which made a brief appearance in this quarter (and became somewhat contentious in the last quarter), was related to the issue of balancing choice and control. This time it was a matter of who had control over decisions made about the grouping policy for the Units in 1987. While the administrative team had made a decision, prior to the departure on leave of the deputy principal and the assistant principal to continue with one/two groupings in 1987 the decision was not accepted as final by some teachers. (see pages 90-91)

WEEK	EVENTS	DATA COLLECTION
20 30 Jun	ELIC -further 6 weeks for Linda, Liz, Rhonda, Jan Chris begins Grad Dip. in E.C.S.	
21 6 Jul		
22 13 Jul		
23 20 Jul	Deputy principal on study leave for remainder of second semester. Assistant Principal on long- service leave for 5 weeks	
24 27 Jul		Interviews Units 1,2,3,4
25 4 Aug		
26 11 Aug	second group begin ELIC Helen, Jan, Jenny	
27 18 Aug	Liz (Unit 3) on long- service leave of five weeks	
28 25 Aug		Interview with Assistant Principal distribute draft report
29 1 Sep		group meeting to receive feedback regrading draft report - no major disagreements with the story as told to date Interviews Units 1,2,3,4
30 8 Sep		
31 15 Sep		Interviews Principal and Assistant Principal

OVERVIEW OF EVENTS SIGNIFICANT IN THE CHANGE PROCESS

In this quarter there were fewer external events to be taken into account, such as inspections, student teachers in the room and advisory personnel visiting. Parents were highly visible in school and classroom affairs and there were many indications that individual parents were supportive of their child's teacher. As a consequence teachers appeared to be less inhibited by what others might be thinking , and thus able to be more reflective about their own practices.

One result was that the teacher's own philosophy and previous teaching experience was more often reported as an influence on decision-making. Teachers began to make more frequent references to the way in which previous experience was shaping what they now felt able to do.

31.7.86: I'm beginning to worry because I'm not doing so much formal language, but they all seem to be writing which is very pleasing and we have really got into spelling, going around and helping children see their own spelling mistakes.

31.7.86: . . also we are trying to get them to remember that there are other kids that they can go to for help. The littlies are starting to realise there are other people they can turn to, where for the first six months we found that a lot of things we did made them draw to us. We now look for ways to make the room predictable so that children can help themselves.

31.7.86: I met some teachers at an inservice course who taught reading 'pa, pu, pi . . I thought goodness am I wrong. I don't do that. I don't know too much about teaching early reading so I do what is instinctive for me; the Mt Gravatt handbook has proved useful;

31.7.86: . . but I also have to get out of the habit of directing; using somebody's else's words, ' I'm still being the sage on the stage not the guide on the side'. That really hit home when I heard it said at a meeting.

3.9.86: . . as a process I'm learning it the better way, even though mostly I learn what not to do . . I find I'm doing a lot more individual teaching now and taking the opportunity, even if it is for only one or two minutes, to get a point across to one child at a time. I don't stand up and deliver a whole class lesson because it is wasted on a lot of them.

3.9.86: I think the most important decision is to just not worry so much. It's hard to do that. I still feel a bit uncomfortable with the two levels. I think it is because we have struggled to get groups to be working all at once and we don't seem to be able to get something that we are happy with. If we try to have a group that is an independent group they can't seem to motivate themselves, even with parent help.

5.9.86: . . sometimes I worry about the old sheet where we gave them work and they filled in the missing words, perhaps they are missing out something . .

5.9.86: I'm a little bit concerned still but I see the results, they seem to be reading like mad and writing

5.9.86: . . where I was saying about the problem of them not getting the basics, well I can see that they have got all that now.

extract from transcript of
MAGNETWORK MEETING, BARDON STATE SCHOOL, 10.7.86

I feel you can't do everything, you can't say - we are going to follow this system, we'll have them integrated, we're going to have a developmental type of sequence, we're going to have all the children work at their own pace - and then at the same time say - Oh, gosh we must make their writing perfect - even though our philosophy is totally emersed within this system, we still look at the end of some days and say, Ooh I'm worried about the children; they're still printing in upper case letters and what are we going to do . .
. . so then we have planned these activities by the week; they go over to a fortnight sometimes. This one is a story which is to do with our theme drawn from a library book; eight children go there, then there is printing; well these can be all different this is just for this week.
. . As a group do you ask them to nominate which one of these things, so you know where childen are going?
. . And it takes how long for them to go through all those?
They don't all have to go through them all. We run it usually over a fortnight . .
. . and printing of the snowflakes was another, and a story; the children come back and write the story about which they have just read and then illustrate it.
So they are the groups for the next fortnight?
Do they have a choice where they go?
Yes, they choose and they are very good about that. They just whip through and the next day we might say, 'story today' and hands go up and we say all right off you go. We choose them from the hands that go up and it seems to work really well. We record that everyday. We have it down to a fine art, only we can read it.
. . on a billboard?
. . just on these sheets, that's what it looks like and we know exactly where they have gone.
. . So to get back to your question H.., do all children go to every group? Obviously there are some who take a longer time would perhaps miss one group.
Yes, and that doesn't worry us because when you think what those activities are, a lot of the same type of things are included, like - that science took in craft and language, writing, as well as the science part of it exploring the bark and talking about the trees. So even within the one activity, the learning is so integrated that they are gaining the skill just by going to a few, they don't have to do the eight.
. . So you spend you whole day doing these activities?
No, that's in the morning that is the developmental activity. The middle period is the language and it works in exactly the same way only all the activities are based with language and we also have a process writing time where the children .....
. . Free choice again or more directed to where they should go?
No, they each have their own writing folder and we would have some focus each day, whether it be a poem, story or book or a little video
. . For the whole group to see?
Yes, the whole group.

All the teachers, this quarter, were involved in inservice courses. Seven of the eight teachers attended E.L.I.C. workshops and the other teacher was enrolled in a Graduate Diploma in Early Childhood Studies course. In the prevailing, calm atmosphere related to the project they were able to reflect on ideas presented and to select some to experiment with in order to make further changes to how they implemented the curriculum in the classroom. The teachers were exposed to similar types of input yet they selected different ideas for closer examination.

UNIT 1: 31.7.86: Linda is on the E.L.I.C. program at the moment and has suggested a grouping method based on colour which we can use to help us keep check on children. We can divide the whole group into four colours and they can store their folders in a colour box. We can take one colour home at night and monitor what their progress is, keeping a check on what they are doing.

UNIT 2: 5.9.86: It has given us a lot of specific practical ideas that we really didn't have, like that reading keyring plus the writing conferencing area and the sling for storing big books.

UNIT 3: 31.7.86: As part of E.L.I.C. we had to decide to change some part of our room, we decided to set up a writing centre. This led to us changing the whole room again and it's working better.

Teachers also attended two multi-age group teacher network meetings during the quarter where they shared perceptions on the change process with up to 35 other teachers involved in similar change processes. It was evident at these meetings that the provision of choice was an issue for some of the other teachers as well as for teachers at Leafy Wood. (See extract from discussion at a teacher network meeting on the page opposite)

During this quarter staff were absent for varying periods, on study leave, on long-service leave, attending inservice courses and the inevitable short periods of illness. The deputy principal was on study leave for the second semester of the year and the assistant principal took five weeks' long service leave in the middle of the quarter. Absences by administrative staff had little discernible effect on the process of change. The relieving staff appointed to the school followed the policies and procedures already in place.

Teacher absences had a more noticeable effect. Teachers reported that they were less likely to continue with innovatory practices when they had a relieving teacher in the room. One reason for this appeared to be related to the degree to which the innovation was in place so that children were competent in the use of new routines and in responding to new expectations and the relieving teacher could fit easily into the routine. Another factor was the teacher's feelings of competence in initiating another teacher into the new practice. The third reason mentioned was the reaction of the relieving teacher; if she reported that she had difficulty adjusting to the new practice the classroom teacher made modifications.

31.7.86 Unit 4: I think it has worked for us this year and we are very happy with it. We had a goal of a 1,2,3 that we were heading towards and that has been wiped. Now I think 'what have we got, we have gone into this individualised program working children at their own level and given them the next experience they need and everyone is working depending on their needs, but now what?'

I think it is important for some of those children who are at present in year two that we get them out of their present program and start to prepare them for more written work. I think that is part of our responsibility to make sure they have a smooth, happy transition. I don't want them to face trauma at the beginning of next year if they get a teacher who does a lot of fairly formal work. I don't want to cause trauma for children by being too far divorced from someone else's espectations so they have too large a leap to make. It is not what I want to do but it is what will keep the child happiest for longest that I'm concerned about.

5.9.86 Unit 2: I think there is a snag in the works as to whether there is to be a 1,2,3 next year.

5.9.86 Unit 3: I'm wondering if in the last term stress will come back again because lots of decisions have to be made about what is going to happen in these rooms next year. There is a bit of disagreement amongst the teachers. We would like to have a one/two again so we can get more organised based on what we learned this year. They (the administrators) think we need to be more reflective about how the whole program has gone and that some of us are not integrating enough.

31.7.86: When the relieving teacher was here we just reverted to the original way we did things, the ones with her and the twos with me. The ones just didn't seem ready to do a lot of things the others were doing.

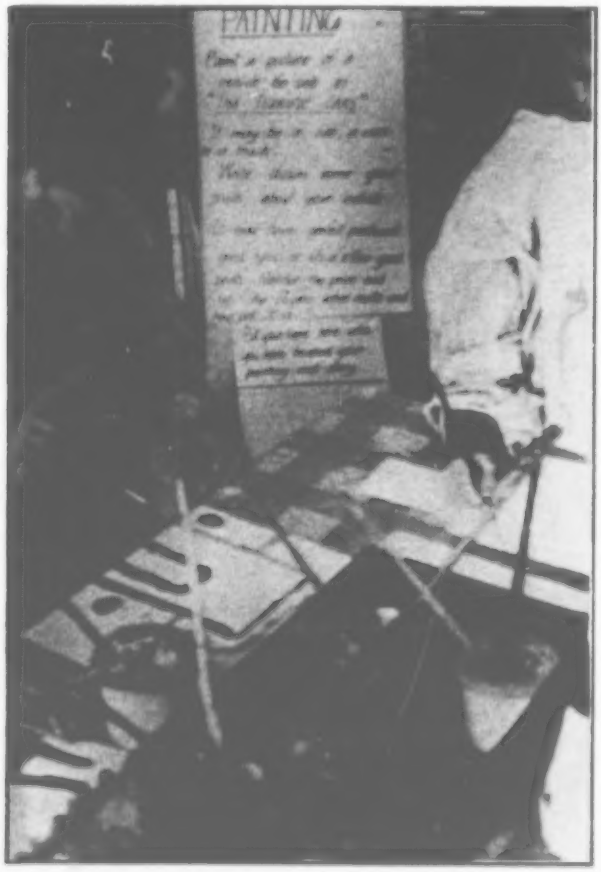
31.7.86: She said to me two or three times, 'I can't cope with the noise, also she felt a bit uncomfortable about parents working with the children during language and this made me uncomfortable . .

5.9.86: We have not made any changes of late because Liz is not here for the rest of term.. The relieving teacher has been really good and we have been doing just the same program, except we have probably gone back a bit because Liz and I had started to do more integrated language, but with the change of teacher we felt there was enough change already.

Prior to the departure of the deputy principal and the assistant principal on leave, the administration team had reviewed options for a grouping policy for 1987. It was decided, after taking into account the long education program necessary to help parents cope with innovation, and the range of grouping preferences among teachers in the Units, to opt for a continuation of the groupings used in 1986. This was not accepted as a shared decision by the teachers and teachers began to lobby among themselves for a change to the decision.

The observer as an influence: Earlier in the year teacher reactions suggested that teachers felt mildly threatened that the observer might be making unfavourable judgements about the decisions teachers were making. By the July/September period she appeared to be accepted as a benign presence interested in what teachers actually did and why they made those decisions. Some teachers expressed the view that she was a positive influence, in the way that the teacher networks were. She provided a forum for reflecting on what was happening which helped teachers clarify their own thinking and to feel more confident about what they were doing.

Unit 1. Previously we'd seen ourselves as fully responsible for everything that we thought was a teaching type situation. Now that children are more responsible and parents are helping we thought that if the instructions were written down on big posters they would cope better . . and they do.



DIRECTIONS IN TEACHER DECISION-MAKING

Until this quarter teachers, in their reports on decisions made, had emphasised changes to room arrangement, to time-tabling and to the way groups were selected - by ability, by current achievement, by needs in terms of a set task, by year level or by friendship. Few comments were made about changes in the use of resources, possibly because the provision of suitable resources for hands-on activity and more flexible reading approaches had been given attention during the period of preparation in 1985 and even prior to this as part of the general school policy for the lower school since 1983.

Teachers had, early in the year, been concerned about how to keep track of children in a program where there was more movement in the room, but as they got used to the changes in routine this area had been mentioned less frequently. In the second quarter they had begun to question the effectiveness of the way that they were currently using themes and the style of activity they were using with mixed-ability groups. As a result they had begun to investigate alternatives to their previous ways of designing themes and activities.

These concerns continued into the third quarter and teachers began to mention more frequently the organisation for the curriculum content areas of language and mathematics and to a lesser extent science and social studies. The interest in change in language and mathematics apeared to be related to the teachers' growing skill in balancing child choice and teacher control of learning. Decisions regarding change in science and social studies appeared to be related to concerns that these areas had not been receiving enough attention. There was also renewed interest in trialling ways of monitoring individual progress in the language area.

Organisation of curriculum content: As part of the major strategy for change in the first quarter, the Units had introduced a different style of program for Session 1. A range of hands-on activities were set up in learning centres. Learning in science, social studies, health, art, science, mathematics and language were promoted through these activities. Session 2 and Session 3 each day was devoted to language and mathematics with little change in the style of teaching/learning from what teachers had used previously. Now the teachers in some Units began to look again at the organisation for learning in these sessions.

The language session was the area where most change was reported this quarter, most probably because the teachers were involved with E.L.I.C. As the E.L.I.C. workshops were promoting teaching/learning strategies where teachers responded to child interests and current abilities the teachers found ideas they encountered at the workshops suitable for trialling in their classrooms. The first group of four teachers completed their course in early August and a second group started their ten week course in August. Each teaching team selected different ideas to pursue.

A change in grouping strategies in **Unit 1** had been trialled towards the end of the second quarter while the third year student was present. At the start of the third quarter the teachers had continued using three mixed-ability groups but found it difficult to maintain with two teachers and parent help. The difficulties were exacerbated when one member of the teaching team was absent on a music inservice course and the relieving teacher had to be initiated into the new way of working. It was decided to revert to year level groups for the language session but to keep the mixed groups for the first session.

In the second quarter the teachers had decided to use one theme for the whole class instead of following the Mt Gravatt reading scheme and using separate themes for each year level. As this quarter progressed the teachers found it became more efficient to change the way they planned themes as a basis for motivating interest during the language session each day. Instead of planning in detail all the words to be introduced, all the activities to be provided and so on before the theme was mentioned to children, preplanning involved deciding how to introduce a theme in the Monday language session in such a way that children brought their own ideas to bear on the topic. The teachers then devoted a considerable amount of energy to recording child interests and current knowledge, deciding with children the vocabulary focus for the week and responding to children by providing resources that built on their emerging interests.

> Our themes have been a lot less restricted too. Before we had specific activities which we thought were related to that theme and we'd have a list to work through over the week. Now, especially in that Monday time we are more likely to go where the class is going. Last week we took them over to the shopping centre and when we came back it just turned out that they had sorted themselves into six groups and were busily writing and drawing. The parent helpers kept saying 'come and look at what these kids are doing'.
>
> It is also affecting what we do for preparation at the weekends. I ring Helen and we know now that it is a bit dangerous to have an expectation that you can write down a particular set of things to do, although we still do that. It is a bit like the way we do activities in the developmental morning , there are 'must does' for ourselves and for the children. I know that Helen with the ones has quite a lot she wants to hear and she wants to check their vocabulary, and on the Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday she will have that time and use parents helpers or whatever. I do much the same with the twos.
>
> . . we have gone into a more informal form of recording our plans now where we are not obsessed with tying up all the loose ends first. We had worked in a more traditional way where the teacher controls what everyone does, this group is for this and don't attempt anymore; it was the old objective / evaluation where you are looking at the end of the activity to see if you have reached that objective without worrying too much about how you got there.

The teachers in **Unit 2** also reported changes in the way they were planning for language learning. These teachers had spent considerable time this year developing strategies that worked for them in providing choice for children within a program where they were becoming proficient readers, writers, speakers and listeners. They collected ideas from many sources - visits to schools, E.L.I.C., advisers, books. Now they found that it worked for them to code much of the material in their room and to place it in learning centres or on small separate displays where children had free access during the first two sessions of the day. They were particularly pleased with their handwriting display which provided an opportunity for children to practice handwriting using suitable models, without having to wait until the teacher gave a handwriting lesson. Handwriting lessons were still provided but there was also opportunity for children to model the approved forms at other times during the day. Another useful addition was the colour coded key-ring for reading which provided teachers with a quick check on how children were progressing with their reading and the sling for storing big books.

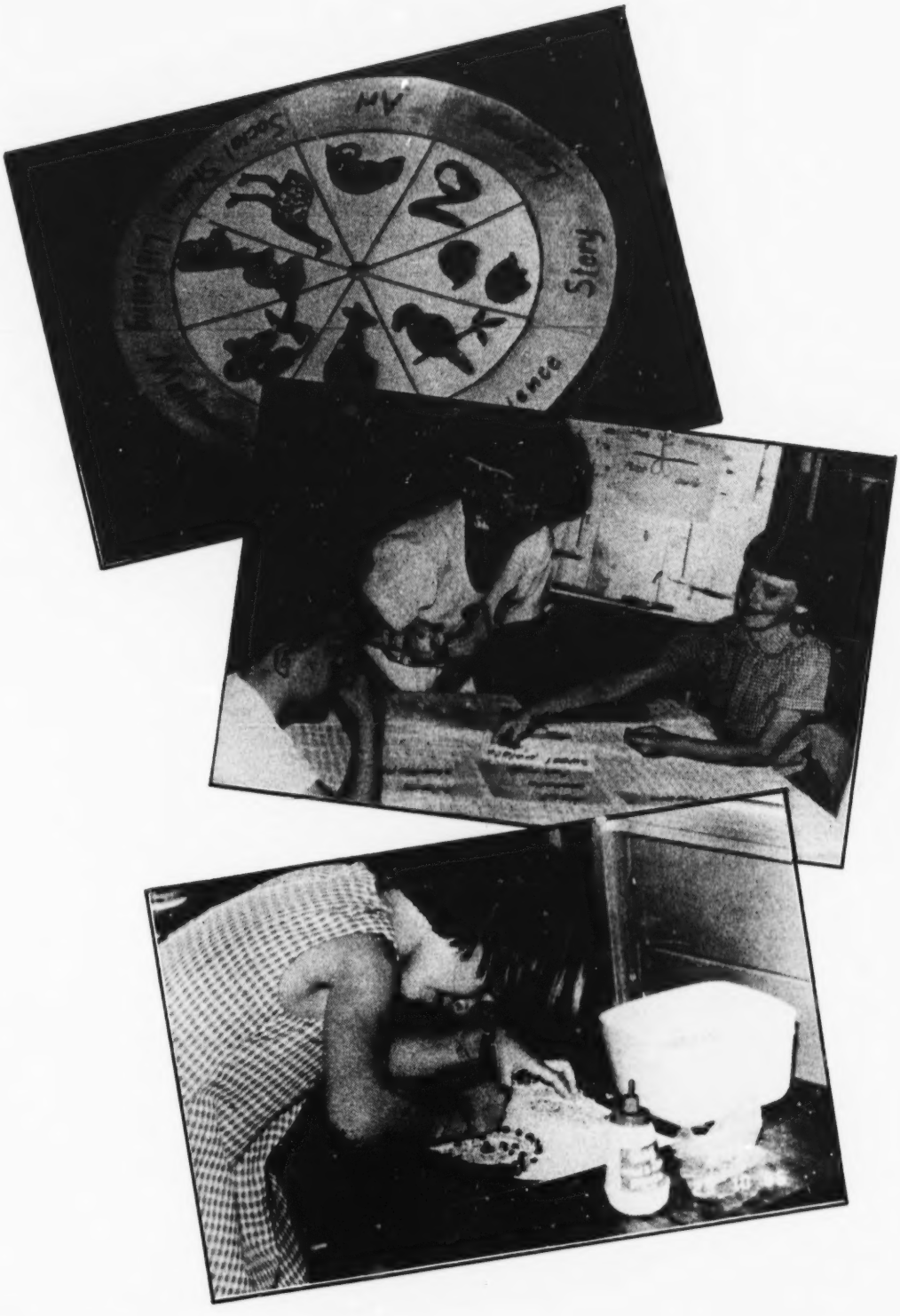
Another change made at this stage was to make a clearer link between social studies and the language program. Concepts drawn from the social studies syllabus were now incorporated into planning for the mid-morning language session.

31.7.86: We are finding we need to put more time into language and maths and social studies. Social studies we always cover in the morning and as well we now have the themes, such as 'families', in the language time.

5.9.86: . . they are much more interested in books now they have more time to decide for themselves; there is more time for them to read, there is more time to do things at their own speed. For instance, two of the children have been working on a picture storybook this week and they have spent most of this week doing the pictures, painting activities, and getting time to think about what they want to do and now they are going to sit down, two of them, and write the text. The fact that they are working in co-operation wtih each other on the thing is helping them to get their ideas. They have even been ringing each other up at home to talk about what they are going to do. If you didn't give them that time those sort of things just wouldn't occur. They are some of the bonuses that you get.

5.9.86: We are in the process of trying to set up a writing are over there. You see what is happening in reading now we would like to flow through into the writing, the choice of being able to choose your own topics, getting into writing and conferencing in a less structured sort of system. If they need a conference they can book in for a conference. that is the next part of our program, trying to get the writing as relaxed as the reading, that self-selction and getting the process of writing more from them. We can see now that the more that they do themselves the much better off the room is.

Organisation is the crux of it, and getting the children confident with being able to do things for themselves. That has taken nearly the whole year. . . that is the thing. You take one step at a time getting one thing ready. This was a lot of our trouble to start with because you're trying to get the kids to change too much where they can only cope with one thing at a time.


Story

For **Unit 3** the first five weeks of the quarter was a time when they trialled teaching approaches which shifted more of the decision-making about language related matters onto the children. This involved greater use of alternative reading schemes to the Mt Gravatt scheme which both teachers had used previously, changes to the way the vocabulary to be learned each week was selected, and changes to the way children were helped to become spellers. These changes represented major changes in direction for the teachers They expressed a certain amount of trepidation and took care to observe the effects of the changes on children's competency in the language area.

31.7.86: (describing room changes) . . so we have now turned that into a really nice listening area. We are now going to set up a listening tree, so children can come in the morning and listen before school and also when they have finished all their work. . . this table is for the top twos whom we want to extend further. . . this is the story writing area, we are using that trolley with all the writing equipment on it in there, and down there we have changed into a reading corner. We still have this lovely big area for our themes and we also use it for exercises and bringing them together for shared book activities. Also it gives us a big space where we can spread out our shapes and games during maths in the afternoon.

31.7.86: At the moment we feel it is more important for us to be with the writing during developmental morning so we are going to have parents supervise the science and social studies activities then; the plan is so open-ended that the kids do most of the work and the parents only need to do a little bit of the talking. We intend to have a big block of an hour on Friday afternoon where we can do a big social studies and science unit with all the mixed group.

Now the children write more we have to change our reporting time at 10.15. We will get them to report only to their groups. We had organised it that we ring a bell and they finish packing up and come together as a whole group and children who have been at story listening report and tell the story or those writing tell their story. It was good when it started but now that a lot of children are writing a lot more there is too much to report. In the eight small groups they can report better now, especially as the twos are helping the ones so much. The twos are becoming so responsible that if I have to go somewhere I say 'these children in the group can help you', and that makes the twos even more responsible.

Also we have changed our spelling. I'm going around now and finding the children's words that are common, like 'was' and 'there' and getting them to tell us, for instance, if they have three letters right we might say, ' good, you have three letters right but you need these letters' or ' you have these letters in the wrong order'. I've fixed up a few with the twos in the shared morning and the next time they have written a story they have those words right. Chris has changed her spelling program too and she is liking it much better. She is using the quota system which the N.S.W. Education Department uses. It helps children work out their own pace better. Before, they had a list and if they completed that list the mother heard them, if they got it all right they went on to the next list which was hard for some children. Some of the slower children would never get a list of ten words right. With this system it allows them to progress as they get each little bit right.

31.7.86: The only area we are having difficulties with is that conferencing with the writing, we are finding that really difficult. We are trying to do that in our developmental morning even if we only get to one group each a day. By Thursday each group will have had us once.

5.9.86: This term we have changed our approach to reading because we don't stick so much to the language that is in the books. I think it has something to do with working in a more integrated way, we have to plan more broadly. Whatever we are doing and displaying it has to be for both groups so you can't just be specific for one of them. Last year we did stick to the book, that was the language sheet that went home, we even got into doing the flash card business and following those phonics, whereas this time we are feeding in phonics as they come along. I'm still concerned with the twos, I still worry that I'm not presenting them enough material to read, they are doing a lot of writing and they are reading their writing or doing a lot of small group writing . . I still see the results though, they seem to be reading like mad and writing. We spend a lot more time observing what children really do now.

chair
share

The major changes reported in **Unit 4** this quarter were related to the grouping of children to cater better for differences in achievement. More extensive use was made of the library, both for generally learning to appreciate a library and to learn how to use a library effectively. The librarian took groups of about 15 children at a time to tell them stories and to help them use the library themselves. Also the library was used to extend the 'high flyers' in reading.

31.7.86: We are negotiating our own library times each week now; we don't go to the library at a set time for each year level group. This has made a big difference because we don't go up to the library ourselves but we are doing more in the classroom to stimulate interest in the library. To start with we have three library groups that go separately. Edith might talk to the group for five minutes or show them books in the library.

Also our 'high flyers' go up for reading log. Every Wednesday at 11.30 they go up and choose a book, read it, and then have to talk about it, give their opinions, any difficulties they had, words they liked. The librarian usually has a look at what they are doing. I think she enjoys it. They have a reading for pleasure time then they have to fill in their reading log when they have finished. There are six of these children and they work at their own speed, going up to the library by themselves and coming back in about an hour or an hour and a quarter, when they are finished. They are really very responsible.

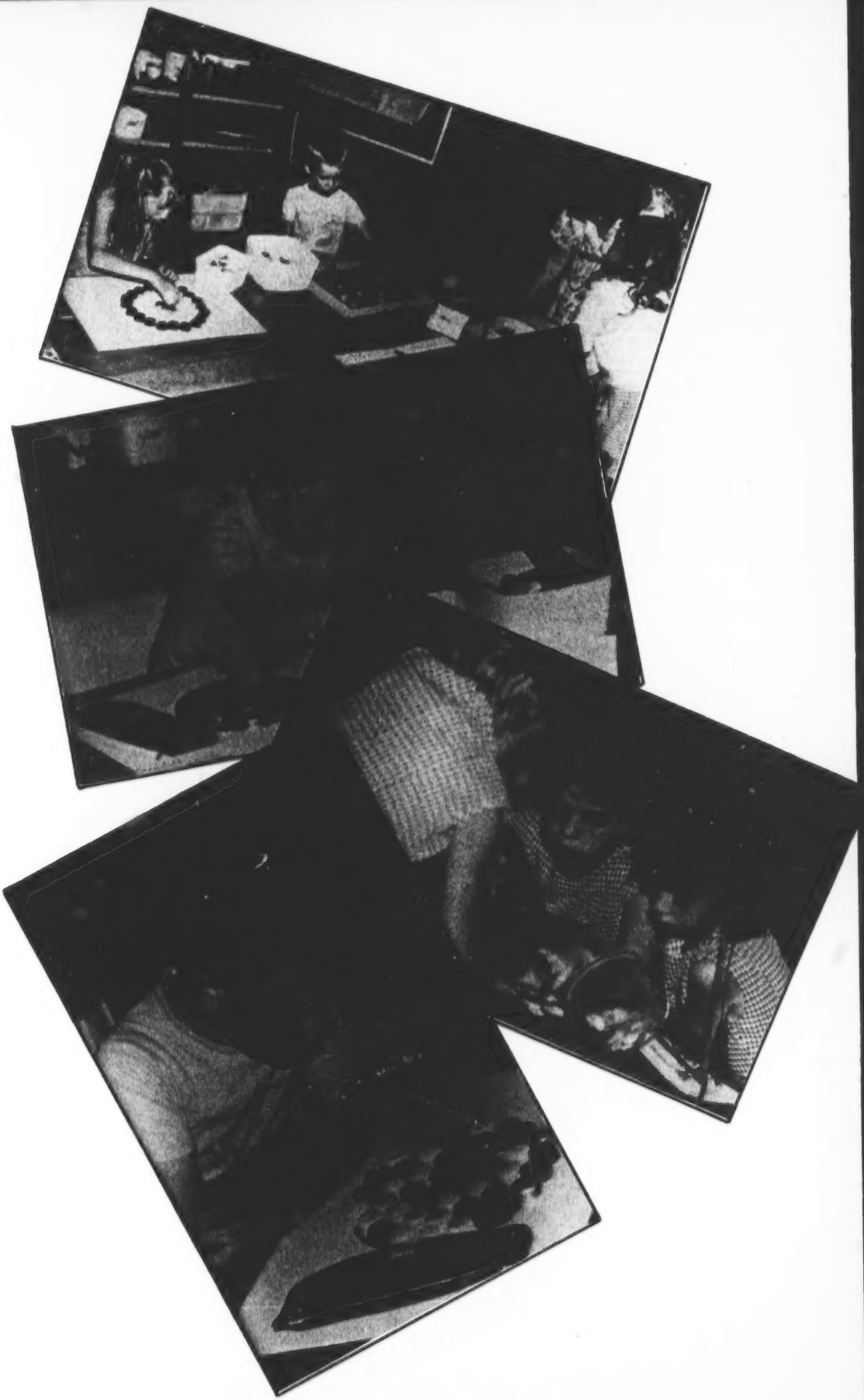
As well as having the flyers use the library like this we have negotiated time (every Monday morning) where the others can go up for reading. There are three separate groups for this. Last week Edith was showing one group the early readers books just at their level. These groups are based on how well they are reading so Edith can show them their part in the library, and we have taken on the responsibility of explaining the library in the classroom. That is working quite nicely.

Another benefit from this way of using the library is that there are fewer children in the classroom at one time. We have always found that 45 children in the one room, with them moving around all the time, is too much. It is too noisy for one thing.

2.9.86: We have made very few changes in the last month, though we have changed the afternoon a little so that when we do process writing we have three groups, one group working with a teacher on story writing, another group doing activity writing such as filling out a form, doing a map, writing a letter or discussing writing. The third group has free writing time and usually for half that time they are in the library doing their writing. We have negotiated more time again for use of the library.

We are quite happy with our program at the moment. We are probably achieving a fair bit with the way the children are getting a lot of free time in the mornings. I think they are happy with that and they do a lot of different activities. Somedays they might be doing a lot of physical education things, for instance we do skipping, and other days they are right into an art activity. Some days we might start out the language games or the maths games and have most of them doing that all morning. Sometimes, though, we have to ban Lego because the same children want to sit there and only play with Lego, and probably they have it at home anyway.

We mainly do our reading activities in the morning because we have found we just weren't getting it done. Some of their reading of course incorporates art, sometimes they use Lego with it, things like that. Today they were doing robots so they could do construction, Lego and so on as part of that. One of us is responsible for the ones in the morning and the other for the twos.



Mathematics was mentioned occasionally as a source of concern this quarter, though teachers did not report changes that resolved their concerns. Some of the remarks were related to the fact that the school was trialling the source material being produced to support the new Years 1-10 mathematics syllabus. The material being trialled was still in an early draft form and difficult for teachers to use. Another perceived problem was a difference in the difficulty of the concepts being introduced for Year One children and those for Year Two children. In general teachers found it more difficult to integrate year one children and year two children for mathematics learning than they did for learning in other subject areas.

Pupil-free days and after-school meetings had been used by school staff to put together an overview of mathematics which they hoped would help them to plan more effectively across the two levels. The mathematics advisory teacher working with the school for the trial had helped in this exercise. A visit to the Mitchelton Centre 2000 gave an impetus to thinking about mathematical problem-solving activities to use in the classroom. The classrooms had a considerable quantity of attractive hands-on materials for mathematics. Some teachers still, however, did not feel comfortable with their current ways of implementing the mathematics program.

> We do maths in the afternoon, some sit at desks, others on the floor, some in the withdrawal room, and we mostly use an activity approach. At the moment they are enjoying that 'tens' game, and we are doing polygons and hexagons and having a lovely time cutting and making shapes . . next quarter though we hope to integrate the two groups more.

> We are going to set up a problem-solving centre next. This is taken from a Curriculum Services booklet on problem-solving that we thought was quite good, and we are going over to Centre 2000 to get ideas.

> The new syllabus is beaut the way it is slowed down, but the jump at year two is incredible. In the first year they come to school with so much knowledge about number concepts and then in year two they have so much more with the tens and ones and the algorithms.

> We virtually just have the two groups for maths in the afternoon, though we split these groups into two again and rotate them around the activities. One group will work independently and one group with the teacher. Sometimes I'll take the whole year level depending on what we are doing. Sometimes it might be a needs group if some of them can't get the idea.

CHAPTER 5

WHERE DID WE END UP

AND

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

October to December, Fourth quarter

ORT
IN IT
29 10 86

This fifth chapter of the story about the process of change at Leafy Wood State School is told in two parts. The first part describes similarities and differences in the style of curriculum being implemented in each Unit during this quarter, followed by information about tentative plans that teachers were making for the new year. The second part of the Chapter describes influences on teacher decision-making during this last quarter of 1986.

It will be remembered that school personnel had affirmed, in the early stages of the project, the principle of individual differences among the teachers. Decisions about what constitiutes appropriate curriculum practice are, however, not made in a vacuum. As the year progressed a range of influences on decision-making led to similarities among the curriculum practices used by the teaching teams. Another range of influences led to differences in curriculum practice.

CURRICULUM PRACTICES

This section looks at the way in which each teaching team was implementing the curriculum in mid-November of this first year of change in the way the curriculum was implemented in the classrooms. The categories used to describe what was happening reflect the areas of decision-making that teachers tended to focus on to describe the changes they made, that is, grouping, room arrangement, content, activities and monitoring children.

The teachers in Units 1, 2 and 3 reported fewer changes this quarter while the team in Unit 4 reported a major change to their grouping strategies and few other changes during the quarter.

During this quarter teachers began to consider changes they might make in 1987 in the light of what they had learned during the year. Their reports on plans for the new year are considered at the end of this section.

is a camel

Grouping of Children:

This was a major focus for the school when they decided to undertake a change in the way the curriculum was implemented in the lower-primary school. Among the school staff, and among the wider community of educators in Queensland, it was being proposed that there were a number of positive advantages in this type of grouping:

- a wider age-range of children would be of benefit for slow developers who could remain with the same teacher and some of the same group of children for two,three or four years until they were able to achieve competently in the lower-primary school;

- incorporating two or more age-levels in one room would create a situation where teachers found it necessary to change the way they dealt with syllabus expectations in day-to-day curriculum practice;

- having to deal with a wider age-range would encourage teachers to think less about the class as a whole and more about individual children.

Changes were made to the grouping of children in Units to include two year-level groups in each of the four Units at the start of 1986. It was agreed that teachers should try to avoid labelling children as 'ones' and 'twos', and that other forms of grouping should take the place of year level groups. Although teachers had attempted to find ways of referring to groups of children in the room other than by year level, they were still using essentially year level terms by the end of the year, though the extent to which they did that in the classroom itself may have decreased. One team had standardised on the terms the 'littlies' and the 'biggies', but others used 'ones' and 'twos' most of the time.

As reported in the earlier chapters teachers in each Unit had tried a variety of strategies to change traditional grouping practices in their classrooms. Visually there was much less separation of children by year level in all rooms by November. Even where the teachers reported that the children were divided for learning by year level, children in all rooms were moving about in the room, choosing where to work on the carpet spaces used by both groups.

Handwriting was taught to separate year levels in all rooms in November, though in some rooms some children in year two no longer took part in these lessons.

Grouping strategies used in each Unit are described on the following pages. The strategies tended to differ for each of the three major time segments of the day, and were related to the content focus in each session.

UNIT 1

Session 1, 9.00 to 10.45, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday: The whole group came together on the carpet for approximately 25 minutes, for general discussion and to organise such things as who were to be involved in the 'must do' activities, who had special tasks set by the teachers, and to remind children of what was available as self-selection activities. The activities often contributed to an ongoing theme in the room. Children were divided, on a long term basis, into three mixed-ability groups of about 15 children each. Each day one group worked with a teacher on a science or social studies activity somewhere outside the main classroom. The other two groups worked in the classroom, where parents helped to supervise activities and the teacher tried to organise time for observing what children were doing. On Mondays a focusing activity involving the whole class was planned. Friday was a catch up day.

Session 2, 11.00 to 12.30, Monday to Friday: This was designated as language time. One teacher was responsible for planning for each year level, though one theme was now used to focus attention. This was the same theme which shaped the focus for some of the activities during the first session. Many of the activities planned for the second session involved children working on the carpet or at large tables so that visually the two groups were mixed as they chose places to work.

Session 3, 1.30 to 3.00, Monday to Friday: Each session began with a silent reading time. The rest of the afternoon was designated as mathematics time and one teacher took responsibility for each year level. The two groups worked, in the main, in different areas of the room.

UNIT 2

Session 1, 9.00 to 10.45, Monday to Thursday: In this room children were not organised into any special groups but they selected for themselves from the range of activities available. As happened in all Units on some days year level groups were taken out to go to the library. Some ongoing activities had a limit for each day so that children had to sign up for these during the group time. The whole group came together on the carpet for approximately 25 minutes at the beginning of each session, for general discussion and to be reminded about the choices available, some of which were changed each week. Children spent the rest of the morning working at self-selected activities. Friday involved catch up activities.

Session 2, 11.00 to 12.30, Monday to Friday: This session began with a short period organised by year levels. One group had a handwriting lesson while the other group worked in the withdrawal room. After 15 minutes the groups changed places. The rest of this session was organised on an individual basis though one teacher was responsible for each year level. Children worked on writing and reading tasks and the year level teacher observed children and conferenced with individuals. Parents assisted in this session as they did in the first session.

Session 3, 1.30 to 3.00, Monday to Friday: Each afternoon began with a silent reading time for 20 minutes, then the class worked on mathematics activities. One teacher was responsible for each year level, and children rotated around the activities set up on desks or on the floor. Each teacher divided their year level group in two so that one group worked independently or under the supervision of a parent, while the other group worked with the teacher. The teacher sometimes took a directed lesson with about 11 children and sometimes spent the time observing and questioning and taking cues from the children working at set activities.

UNIT 3

Session 1, 9.00 to 10.45, Monday to Thursday: For most of the year the children in this Unit had been organised into eight set mixed-ability groups of 5 or 6 children. They rotated around the eight activity areas sometimes taking a week at other times taking up to a month. The session began with a whole class discussion on the carpet, then approximately 50 minutes at activities, then a period of 30 minutes for reporting back about listening or writing activities. Friday was a catch-up day.

Session 2, 11.00 to 12.30, Monday to Friday: One teacher was responsible for each year level though they both used the same theme as a focus for language learning. The children tended to work in ability groups within the year level group, coming together at the start of the session for a focusing activity and then doing different things.

> 5.11.86: Our aim is to break them into more groups. We have set up this large table for the top twos and there is another group of good ones who work more by themselves. Now the top twos do diary writing during the handwriting lesson so we don't need so many desks facing the blackboard.

Session 3, 1.30 to 3.00, Monday to Friday: This was mathematics time, and one teacher planned for each year level. Children worked on the carpet as well as at desks, using a wide range of games and other materials when they were not involved in a lesson with the teacher.

UNIT 4

Session 1, 9.00 to 10.45: In November the teachers were working with separate year level groups, one at each end of the room, though the middle section of the room contained a range of reading, mathematics and other materials which children from both groups used during their free time.

> 12.11.86: At the beginning of the year the ones and twos were separated, in the middle we worked on an extension of their development. That was really successful for helping the children get to the next stage. Everyone was getting their lessons at the level where they needed them. For the practice sessions games were ready for them. They really benefitted from that especially when the third year students were here. When it came back to two teachers trying to do the same amount it became noisy and confused. Now we are structured a lot more than before. We still have the children working independently a lot but it is within two groups of 22 or 23 instead of trying to work in a group of 45. I have found it a lot more successful for me.

Room Arrangement:

By November all Units were using learning centres though the centres in each room were different in character and were used differently in each program. Units 1 and 2 used learning centres as work places, for writing, for reading, for cooking, for construction, for listening and so on during Sessions 1 and 2. Unit 3 had begun to move in this direction, though the learning centres were used mostly during the first session. Learning centres in Unit 4 were used less frequently as a major part of the daily program in this last quarter.

In all rooms by the last quarter the arrangement of desks suggested, visually, greater integration of the two year levels. In all rooms one set of desks were arranged so that it was easy to have up to 23 children facing a blackboard for handwriting. The teachers in two Units commented that this was the only time that children came together as a year level group to copy work from the blackboard. Earlier in the year teachers had indicated that they wanted to change what they saw as a habit of relying on blackboard work for the whole class. It would seem that they had been successful in making this change.

Visually, the rooms were much more complex in November, as teachers had created little nooks for particular tasks, and learning centres contained much more material. Displays were predominantly children's work.

Content:

In this last period of the year teachers were identifying mathematics as the area where they felt least satisfaction with the changes they had made. While teachers felt that their approach to teaching language had shifted to allow more opportunities to respond to individual differences, yet be sure they were promoting growth in language learning, they did not feel that they had been able to do this to any significant extent in mathematics.

In the first session each day mathematics games and sorting and matching activities were available for mixed-ability groups, but it seemed to be difficult to incorporate these types of activity into a sequential program of learning for mathematics.

Teachers did not report any significant difficulties in incorporating art, science and social studies learning into a mixed-year level class. They taught music and physical education in much the same way as they had previously. Specialist teachers working in these areas continued to teach year levels not mixed ability groups.

We seem to be veering away from rotations though we still have some activities that all the children do. It seems that the activities now tend to be structured with certain children in mind, or sometimes certain levels . . but even if we plan for levels we have one or two children in mind.

Even if we expect that all the children will be at that activity they won't all be doing the same task . . that is probably the main change.

Getting to know what type of activity suits a child depends on a mixture of things, but observation is important.

We get information from observations not only during a setactivity but also at other times of the day. Sometimes it's not a direct observation of a particular child but a feeling in general that that sort of activity is necessary for a group of children. Sometimes it is especially for one child but often we have a group we can cluster and say it certainly won't do them any harm . .

Style of Activity Favoured in the Mixed-Age Situation:

At the beginning of the year teachers had taken steps to incorporate more hands-on activity in the classroom, especially during the first session. As the year progressed they identified other changes that needed to be made to provide for

(a) developmental differences among children, and/or
(b) more child input into their learning experience.

For some teachers these two aspects went together, for others they were separate issues. A concern for developmental difference seemed to relate to the project goal (page 29) ' to cater for different developmental levels among children', while the second concern may be related to the project goals (page 30) of encouraging 'independent thinkers', and 'highly motivated learners who reach their fullest potential'.

The strategies in use in November included

- the use of coded materials which allowed children of differing abilities access to practice activities which matched their current level of attainment; all Units used coded materials, one during the first session only, two Units during the first and second sessions and in the other Unit during free time throughout the day when children had completed tasks set by the teacher;

- planning for themes where detailed plans were made to stimulate interest in the selected topic, then teachers took their cues from children in planning further activities themselves and/or encouraging children to plan what they were going to do themselves;

- designing multi-focus activities which would stimulate learning among children of widely differing abilities; this was the area where two teaching teams reported much satisfaction as they began to gain skill in designing such activities;

- the use of peer tutoring as a strategy which helped the more advanced child practice social skills as well as reinforcing their academic learning, and, helped the slower learner by providing them access to more people who could give them information or demonstrate what to do.

Teachers reported many more difficulties in finding suitable mathematics activities for mixed-age groups than they did finding suitable activities for other subject areas.

SCHOOL TESTING PROGRAM 1986
INFORMATION PROVIDED BY THE REMEDIAL TEACHER

Year One Tests:

Week 1, First Quarter, 1986:
1. Write own name - provides information re letter knowledge, letter formation, fine motor development.
2. Draw a Man Test (Goodenough) - measures intellectual maturity.
These tests were administered by the classroom teachers (specific directions on 'what to say' were provided), and scored by the remedial teacher. Discussion was then held involving teachers, assistant principal and the remedial teacher.

November:
1. Letter identification (Marie Clay) - test all letters, lower case and capital. Pointing to each letter the child was asked - Do you know it's name? What sound does it make?
2. Basic Word Identification - 100 Dolch Sight Words.
These tests were administered by the remedial teacher and the guidance officer.

Year Two Tests:

Week 2, First Quarter:
1. SIA Spelling Test
2. Basic Word Identification - 100 Dolch Sight Words.
These tests were administered and scored by the remedial teacher.

Week 1, Second Quarter:
1. Basic words re-tested by remedial teacher.

November:
1. SIA Spelling re-test.
2. Domain Phonic Test - subtests pages 2 and 3 only.
Domain Test was not completed with all Units due to time factor.
These tests were administered by the remedial teacher and the guidance officer.

TEACHER COMMENTS ON OUTCOMES RELATED TO THE CHANGING STYLE OF CURRICULUM

. . writing was a big plus

. . children are confident, good speakers, creative writers . .

. . it is more the children have changed, they are becoming a lot less teacher directed, more responsible children discovering not us feeding . .

Monitoring Children:

In the last quarter this year as in any other year teachers were involved in testing children in order to ascertain whether they had reached acceptable standards in reading and writing. Some of these tests were teacher designed though advice from the remedial teacher might have been sought when devising the tests. A more formal testing program was undertaken by the remedial teacher working with the district guidance officer. During the period when these tests were being administered there was a degree of concern among the teachers about whether there would be any indication that the children in their Unit had not reached similar standards to the others or to children in other years. The worries abated when results reported by the remedial teacher indicated that there were no significant differences in attainment this year from that attained in previous years, and that the children in each Unit reached similar levels of attainment in the areas tested.

Only the teachers in Units 1 and 4 reported any new developments related to monitoring what children were doing in the classroom or observing what children said and did in order to make decisions about curriculum content. Monitoring what children did had been a major concern early in the year and teachers had tried and abandoned a number of strategies. The strategies decided on by mid-year in Units 2 and 3 continued to work effectively for them. The E.L.I.C. workshops had introduced teachers to some new strategies for observing children and using observations as a basis for planning. Teachers in three Units had reported trying these in the previous quarter.

In this quarter the teachers in Unit 1 reported that they were continuing to develop their skills in using observational techniques to monitor what was happening in their rooms and how children were responding to what was provided. As they made these types of changes they found that their approach to short-term written planning was changing also.

> 16.10.86: We have stopped organising them so much and spend more time observing. I think now is the time when we are learning how to do that, but we still have to find a way to get time to make notes. At the moment, in silent reading in the afternoon we try to make daily notes.

> 5.11.86: There is no longer such a thing as a CCP for six weeks; we have abandoned all that. We write down general things like what we should be doing or things the children must do, and we have a general idea about how to proceed. Then we try to make decisions as we go along, watching how it goes. It's hard work. Even today I said to Helen that we'll have to check about next week's activities because of something this week that I don't want to do again, because most of them have got past that phase and that activity is a waste of time.

In Unit 4 it was reported that the use of two classes within the room provided better opportunities for keeping track of children.

> 12.11.86: I find I can keep better track of what the children are doing now we have only 23 children each to control. I know exactly where they are with this smaller group.

Planning for 1987

Seven of the eight teachers involved in 1986 had elected to continue their involvement in 1987. As the end of the year approached they began to use their reflections on the process of change over 1986 as a basis for making tentative plans for the new year. The types of strategies that teachers were contemplating at this stage are reported here.

10.12.86 Unit 3: It is going to be hard to start with, because we learnt this year that you can't mix your ones and twos too much at the beginning. Once we get past that Easter break I think we will be looking at that group of ones that aren't ready for formal learning and that group that are ready. We are going to try to devise a test to determine the first group and really get stuck into them, pull out the ones who know all their sounds etcetera and put them in with the other group we already have and push them on their way.

25.11.86.Unit 1: We have to work out how to handle three year levels instead of two next year. Our thoughts of the moment are to have the developmental mornings as they are this year, then to have one teacher at a time responsible for direct teaching with small 'needs-based' groups while the other teacher is supervising learning style activities.

25.11.86 Unit 1: Providing continuity for the children who will return to us next year while getting new children used to the routine is another area to think about. Most of us have commented that this year we expected children to be independent without showing them how to go about this.

28.11.86 Unit 4: Initiating the new ones will be the hardest. I think the new teacher and I will probably keep the groups separate so that we can give enough attention to the ones.

29.11.86 Unit 3: Grouping procedures have to be thought out with 17 twos and about 30 ones. Maybe we will have three groups, one group of young year ones, one in the middle and one definitely year two. If we work with three groups we will have three half hour sessions and rotate them . .

29.11.86 Unit 3: We will be changing the way we do our CCP. We will try something like a big sheet on the wall which shows what we have planned.

28.11.86 Unit 4: I will not be quite so conscious of the syllabus next year. That tended to restrict what I thought I could do this year.

25.11.86 Unit 1: Our records on children will be impeccable next year, or so we would like to think. At E.L.I.C. they suggested an exercise book that you carry around and write in it running records, writing stages noted, that sort of thing. Also they suggested keeping work samples . .

10.12.86 Unit 2: There is no need to change our organisation because two-thirds of the kids are used to it now. We will have to familiarise those little ones with the type of room we have and what happens during the day. We will just let the older ones bring them into certain areas and still keep our choosing time. We will provide some more relaxed activities, puzzles, fine motor activities, for the little ones so that they don't have to go straight into something new. We will try to make this a transition time from preschool to school.

25.11.86 Unit 1: Maths is now the biggest worry. It is the last area left for change. The draft material has been too hard to get through but we hope to try again on it next year. A lot of maths is accounted for in the morning but there is not enough time then for one-to-one interaction with children or for small group work.

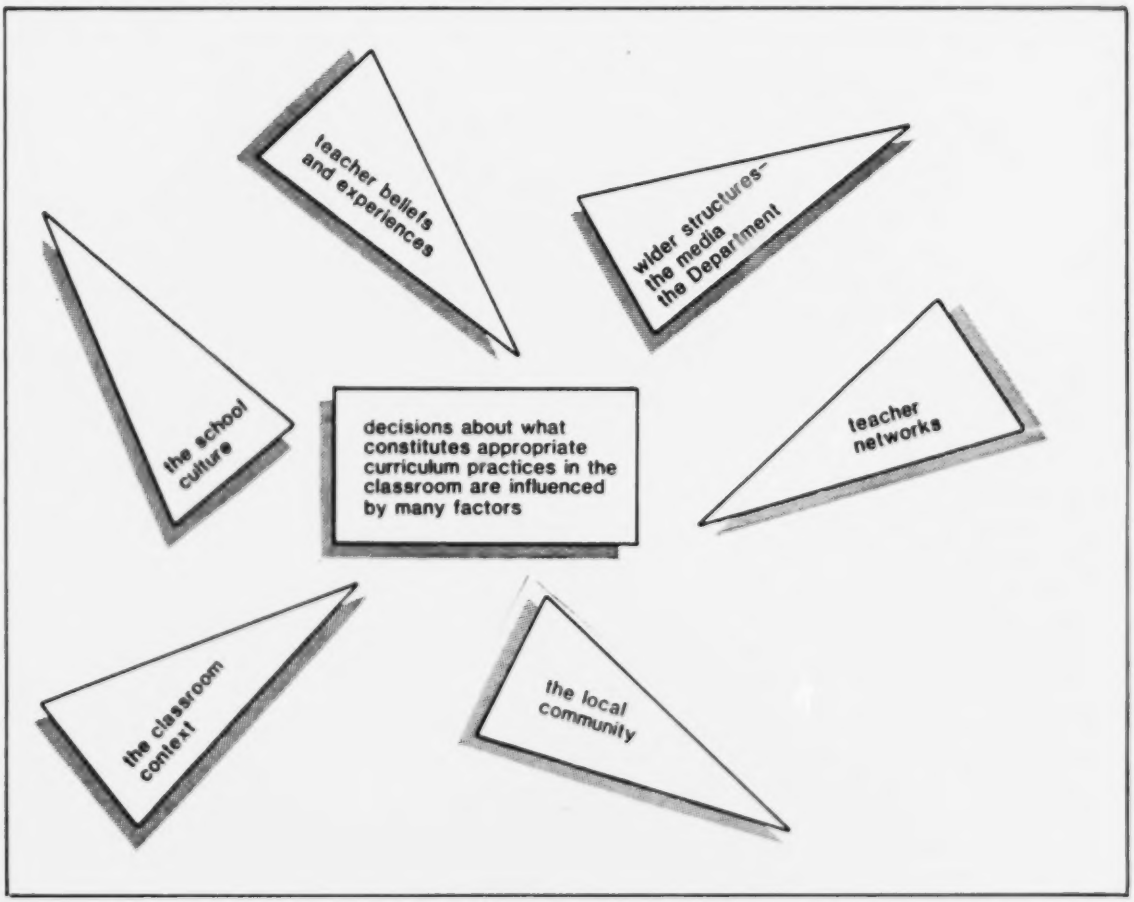
10.12.86 Unit 2: We have been concerned especially about maths for year three. We don't want to do maths in three separate groups, so we've been looking for ideas from other teachers. We would like a 1,2,3 overview so we could help children develop at their own rates but the draft maths material is in year levels. We are thinking of cutting and pasting from the three lots of books but that is a mammoth task. It is important to us to know what leads on to what. If you are taking out of this book, then that book, you are not necessarily preparing them for further learning.

5.11.86 Unit 1: Probably a big change we will make is to use a literature-based language program, using reading schemes like Story Box and Bookshelf and not just Mt Gravatt . .

WEEK	EVENTS	DATA COLLECTION
32 6 Oct		
33 13 Oct	16 staff meeting 8 a.m. and 3p.m. to negotiate about groupings for 1987	16 staff meeting a.m. 16 interviews Units 1,4
34 20 Oct	23 staff meeting to negotiate about groupings for 1987. 23 teacher network meeting	23 teacher network meeting - Everton Park
35 27 Oct	survey to parents distributed to find out attitudes to grouping for 1987	29/30 photographic survey - Units 1,2,3,4
36 3 Nov	P & C meeting where parent raised questions about multi-age grouping;	5 supervise students; incidental discussion with staff; interviews Units 1,3.
37 10 Nov	11 Open Day for incoming parents	11 supervising students incidental discussion with parents 12 supervising students
38 17 Nov	19 parent discussion about the teaching of reading - guest speaker from CAE 20 teacher network meeting	20 teacher network meeting - Payne Rd 20 supervising students 21 supervising students
39 24 Nov	26 parent discussion about the teaching of reading - guest speaker from D of E	25 interviews Units 1,3,4, Assistant P.
40 I Dec		
41 8 Dec		10 interviews Units 1,2,3,4. incidental discussion with Principal and Assistant Principal

INFLUENCES ON TEACHER DECISION-MAKING

In this section the discussion of influences on what teachers saw to be significant areas of decision-making about curriculum practice is organised into six parts, starting with the personal beliefs and unique set of teaching skills which shape what each teacher sees to be possible and desirable decisions. These teachers work within a classroom context where they have to take into account a particular physical setting and the reactions of a particular group of children and adults in the classroom as they relate decisions to the practical realities of classroom life. The teachers also work within a particular school culture, where a group of teachers and administrators negotiate what can be accepted as appropriate curriculum practice. The local community contexts in which the school exists also can influence decision-making by indicating what they see to be appropriate ways of teaching children. The teachers involved in this study of change organised for themselves another context which influenced their decision-making, the teacher networks. A number of recurring influences which are less direct in their impact, but nevertheless important shapers of what teachers come to define as acceptable practice are grouped under a sixth heading called 'wider structural influences' on change.


teacher beliefs and experiences
wider structures- the media the Department
the school culture
decisions about what constitutes appropriate curriculum practices in the classroom are influenced by many factors
teacher networks
the classroom context
the local community

16.10.86: . . about mid-year we felt able to let go a little. We are now letting go just a little more, we feel we are able to now. We are getting the feel of the kids . .

5.11.86: In the beginning our goals were more to do with managing the two groups in one room, but now our goals have become more child-oriented, now that we feel we can cope with the groups.

25.11.86: It took a long time to get over a worry that children were wasting time if they were not reacting to teacher directions all the time. Teachers still like to see that children are doing something that they can identify as learning. Children ought to be busy, they need to be engaged in purposeful and fruitful activity. Yet we can see that some children take a long time to get organised for learning and they are better if not pushed along all the time. It has been a big change to be able to stand back and let children do things in their own time, yet it has been a valuable change.

Teacher Theories and Practical Skills:

There are many observers of curriculum practice in classrooms who believe that teacher beliefs - about how children learn, what they should learn, who decides what they should learn, and how teachers can facilitate that learning - are powerful influences on what happens in the classroom. As the year at Leafy Wood progressed it became more and more evident that teacher beliefs were indeed one of the factors shaping what teachers decided were appropriate curriculum practices in their classrooms. It also became evident that, despite the general agreement among teachers that they were trying to cater for developmental differences among learners, teachers had differing constellations of ideas about how this was done.

Some believed that the best way to cater for developmental difference was to focus on locating children along a developmental continuum, grouping children according to where they were on such a continuum, and then seeking to match a teaching sequence with groups along the continuum. For these teachers the use of multi-age groups simply complicated an already difficult task, because the continuum and the teaching sequence became even longer than it was in a single year level.

> 12.11.86: I think the wider the range and the bigger the number of children the less flexibility you get in day-to-day decisions. I like to have as much flexibility as possible . . and you are not going to teach the same things every year to one year level because you have different children. Any class is a multi-age class but when you get a wider and wider range it becomes a lot more strained and you can't zero in on children at the extreme ends as effectively as when the range is smaller. . I honestly believe that when you get too wide a range of children it becomes even more difficult to individualise instruction . .

Others appeared to believe that the best way to cater for developmental difference was to change the locus of control for learning, helping children acquire the skills to be independent thinkers and to accept responsibility for pursuing learning by themselves. As the year progressed more of the teachers began to pursue this line of thinking about a curriculum that responded to developmental differences.

However none of the teachers felt that they already had skill in making the shift from a teacher-directed curriculum to one where children shared control of the learning process with them. The more experienced teachers indicated some frustration during the year about the hampering effect of previous teaching experience on efforts to develop new skills.

This slow emergence of skill was not something that teachers were prepared for, though once they realised that it took time to change, even when the desire for change was self-instigated, they became more resigned to slow change.

16.10.86: . . it was the boys that were all involved and obviously getting a lot of satisfaction from it (a paper twisting task). Maybe boys need this sort of fine motor activity a bit later than girls do, maybe we should be providing more of this sort of thing in primary school in ways that boys relate to.

5.11.86: It is a little easier now, partly because the children are older and they know us better and we know them better. We know more about what they need. We also know which children will be suitable for a particular type of activity.

5.11.86: . . the only issue is that we have come so far with these children and we don't want to give them up. We find that very difficult though I know we have to do it every year.

5.11.86: The children are lovely now, they are at a beautiful stage. You see what has been achieved at the end of the year and then you say goodbye and start over again.

28.11.86: We had the ones doing the writing and then going up to the twos with their problems. All this interaction benefits the ones and the twos.

10.12.86: . . there doesn't seem to be any animosity about it, no one talks about being a better speller, they just help each other by spelling to each other. You can talk about teaching every single child but you only do that for a couple of them. This way they all help one another.

The Classroom Context:

The classroom context includes a physical setting as well as a cultural setting, where the reality of implementing the curriculum is worked out in interaction with the children, and with other adults who become part of the classroom culture.

Throughout the year teachers had reported that such things as the availability of display space and storage space had created problems to be solved as they decided on changes to the room. By November problems in these areas had been resolved at least temporarily. Teachers reported that they were not making as much use of the outdoor space available to them as they had intended and wished to make changes here in the new year. Other aspects of the physical setting were taken for granted - the double teaching space with wet area and carpet, the withdrawal area, the space for preparation shared by two Units, the resources provided. While some teachers remarked that the amount of space compared unfavourably with the preschool setting and that the rooms were noisy with 45 children in them, in general teachers were able to contemplate the types of changes decided on within the parameters of the physical provisions available.

In each of these classrooms two teachers worked together as equals, jointly responsible for what happened in the room. These teaching teams presented to the investigator a united front throughout the year, indicating that decisions reached were joint responsibilities. Yet behind the scenes there must have been many instances of difficult negotiation and give and take, for all the teachers involved were highly committed professionals with strong ideas about education and proud of their own abilities (even to the extent that they could share with the investigator their fears and the areas where they felt they lacked expertise). This degree of team loyalty was noted among other teaching teams which had elected to become involved in change in 1986, even where there were very obvious differences in philosophies. It seemed that the commitment engendered by making a personal commitment to become involved in the change process team provided a core, a shared goal which transcended other differences.

The classroom is a place where negotiations take place, just as they do in any setting where people interact. The teachers brought their beliefs and values about education to this negotiation process and the children brought their past experiences, their expectations about school and their emerging abilities to the (mostly unexamined) process. The influence of the children in the classroom on what could be considered to be viable curriculum practices was often reported by the teachers. Earlier in the year there were frequent reports that child reactions in the classroom led to adjustments and modifications to teacher attempts to introduce new practices. In November teachers were still reporting that children were shaping what happened but less frequently than they had earlier in the year. It would seem that the participants in the classroom culture had established shared meanings and routines for working together.

The School Culture:

Within the school classroom teachers negotiate sets of meanings about acceptable curriculum practice with other people, among whom the most significant will be the administration team; others will be the specialists such as the remedial teacher, the librarian, the music teacher, the physical education teacher, those aides and relieving teachers who are repeatedly in the rooms; and, other teachers in the school.

When deciding on appropriate ways in which to implement the curriculum, the school culture constitutes a powerful influence, though when teacher beliefs and the school culture are similar the influence is less easily noticed. It is there, though, in the form of a facilitating environment where teachers reinforce one another's beliefs and give one another ideas about how to resolve perceived problems. As this is accepted as 'natural' teachers seldom report it as an influence.

They are more likely to be aware of the influence of administrators, other teachers and non-professionals who work in the school when there are different perceptions on the same situation. This occurred at the school during the last quarter and was related to decision-making about the groupings for each Unit in 1987. The differences of opinion among staff appeared in most instances to be related to decisions about whether to proceed further in the use of multi-age groups, not with the general philosophy of implementing a curriculum that responded to developmental differences. There were, though, a few indications of a difference of opinion among teachers about whether giving children a greater degree of control [choice] over the learning process was a legitimate part of a curriculum-that-responded-to-developmental-difference. Philosophic issues then, were part of the negotiations though less clearly identified than debate about numbers of children and Unit groupings.

In the second week of this quarter the principal and assistant principal called an early morning meeting to see if they could resolve the matter of groupings for each Unit in 1987. This meeting followed up on a number of meetings which had taken place prior to the absence of the deputy principal and the assistant principal in the third quarter, and discussion with individual teachers since the beginning of the fourth quarter. As an external evaluator of the change process at the school, the observer was invited to this meeting to take notes on the proceedings. Consensus was not reached at this meeting, so another one was held in the afternoon of the same day and again on an afternoon of the following week, when some tentative decisions were reached, which still did not satisfy all the teachers.

NOTES TAKEN BY OBSERVER
AT THE MEETING HELD ON 16 OCTOBER

Purpose of meeting: to reach an agreed position regarding grouping of children for 1987.

Discussion began with some teachers identifying classes of children who should or should not remain in their Unit:

- independent workers
- those needing constant teacher direction
- those needing supervision
- the emotionally immature

Questions were raised by other teachers about the desirability of dividing children along management lines. The group agreed that any form of streaming was to be avoided. It was not resolved as to whether some children would benefit from a different style of classroom.

The issue of whether a single grade level would be better was raised and it was claimed that independence and individualising instruction could be promoted just as easily in a single year level class.

Some teachers indicated their preferences at this stage, these including keeping the current group as a 2,3 class, and starting a separate double year one; removing ten children from each of the current groups and bringing in ten year ones; and allowing a process of natural selection to occur as families move on and siblings and friends select their class through consultation with the administration.

The reality of placing the number of children involved was then discussed and various ways of dividing up the numbers were demonstrated on a board.

NOTES FROM TEACHER TRANSCRIPTS

16.10.86: When it was announced that there would be a 1,2 again next year that seemed all right; it may not have been a perfect decision but it was security. Now everything seems to be a free for all because some resented the decision . . and that didn't surface at the meeting today. Communication seems to be a problem.

10.12.86: . . there is confusion that the 1,2,3 is a multi-age group and the 1,2 is not. Even in a straight one you have multi-age levels. I find it confusing that some children can't work in a 1,2,3 but they can work in a 1,2. I think the 1,2,3 will have a greater percentage of independent workers than we will have.

10.12.86: You must have random selection, you can't put someone through the trauma of having a class of low ability children. It isn't fair on the kids; some kids even if they are a problem in the room do react well with independent kids.

10.12.86: There are still a lot of disjointed beliefs among staff about how reading ought to be taught. In a transition time this is always the case.

During this period of unrest it was evident that most teaching teams were trying to reach an acceptable balance among their own preferences, their assessment of their own capabilities and the preferences of others. A very trying negotiating process was underway for some weeks, and this left a residue of unpleasant feelings as does any negotiation process where it is not possible to accommodate the desires of everyone.

The outcomes of the negotiations were that Units 1 and 2 would take a 1,2,3 grouping in 1987, and Units 3 and 4 would take a 1,2 grouping. There would be one double year three and a single two/three classroom. The teaching teams would not change in Units 1,2 and 3. One of the teachers in Unit 4, Jan, applied for a transfer late in the year and it was decided that a teacher returning from accouchement leave who had been part of the planning in 1985 would work with Jenny in Unit 4.

Further negotiations towards the end of the year, over the numbers of children in each Unit also created difficulties, possibly because teachers were feeling bruised by the earlier negotiations and less willing to fit in with others. The teachers taking the new 1,2,3 groups felt that they should have no more children than did the Units taking 1,2 groups and no more than 10 year one children. The administration, however, had a further negotiation process with parents, about placement of children in Units, and wanted to make sure that the families with year three children in the new groupings were happy to be involved. This meant that spaces for families who enrolled in the new year were being left for the Units taking 1,2 groups. The teachers in Units 3 and 4 worried that they would be getting children from the other Units who were slow learners or had difficulties in adjusting to any classroom. Parents with strong feelings about double teaching spaces were able to enroll their children in the single mixed-age two/three class.

A further source of irritation mentioned towards the end of the year was the attitude of some other teachers on staff, who called some of the Units the 'play' places, a term that did not appeal to these teachers. It is probable that this was part of the normal banter that goes on among school staff, but in an atmosphere where teachers did not have a combined front and a few parents were querying innovative curriculum practices in the Units, these comments were taken to heart a little more than usual.

Another aspect of the school culture was the way in which teaching teams from each of the four Units influenced one another during the year. While the strategy of planning across Units was tried earlier in the year and found to present too many difficulties, teachers still supported each other by sharing ideas and activities planned for the morning session or related to a particular theme. They also joined in group debate when one of the teaching teams had a problem to resolve. Informal support over coffee in one or other of the Units played an important part in decision-making during the year. This was the type of support that teachers sought to extend by establishing networks among teachers involved in similar changes.

The Local Community:

While the local community in some schools, and in time gone by, was an insignificant influence on decision-making about the curriculum, in this school it was part of the school policy to encourage open communication so that parents were an informed body, willing to support their school for the benefit of their children.

Events in the latter part of the year indicate how this policy was worked out in practice, when parents chose to question what was proposed for 1987 in the lower school.

As is indicated above teachers in the one/two Units had not reached any consensus about the groupings in the lower school in 1987. It is possible that parents were well aware of some disagreement given the extent to which parents were involved in school affairs, and that this led to a degree of uncertainty among parents about what they wanted. Also in the third week of the quarter the assistant principal distributed a survey to parents asking their opinions about the multi-age groupings and whether they wanted to include year three children in 1987. Results of the survey indicated that approximately 90 percent of parents were happy with the present arrangements though they were less sure about whether they wanted to extend this up to the year three level.

While some of the teachers felt upset about the ten percent who did not give full support for the project, it was generally accepted that this was a reasonable response from such an open call for opinions. The school team continued to negotiate in the hope of finding an acceptable grouping formula that would suit all the teachers who wished to be involved in 1987.

At the P & C meeting held in the fifth week of the quarter one parent, however, spoke out very strongly against the multi-age grouping concept. He followed up his comments at the meeting by distributing a letter to parents at school gates over the following days, and providing his telephone number so that paretns could accept his invitation to a meeting in a parent's home during that week. School staff were quite startled by this turn of events and so too were the body of parents who spent considerable time at the school and in classrooms.

Over the next two weeks the administration team made it clear that they were available at any time for consultation with parents about their concerns and that their concerns would be taken into account before any final decision was made. About twenty parents felt strongly enough about the issue to arrange to talk with the principal. Parent deputations visited the principal, and individual parents consulted with the principal and/or the assistant principal. Few parents consulted with individual teachers because they said that their concern was not with what individual teachers were doing but with the general administrative decision to have multi-age groups.

During the period of consultation with these parents the principal identified a range of concerns some of which were to do with the previous experience of the parents and others were based on differing beliefs about what constituted appropriate curriculum. For instance, there were a few parents who said they just could not accept that children were learning when they were moving about in the room and talking instead of sitting listening to teachers.

Action taken to allay some of the anxieties of parents included arranging two meetings for parents about the teaching of reading, one in the daytime and one at night. Reports that filtered back through the teachers indicated that these meetings at this time were helpful, even though there had been a series of workshops about the teaching of reading during the year, and the parent folder distributed to incoming parents contained pamphlets about modern approaches to the teaching of reading.

During this time it was decided that there were to be two years 1,2,3 Units and two years 1,2 Units in 1987, together with a double year three and a single 2,3 class. Individual parents were given the opportunity to indicate where they would prefer their child to be placed. As well parents enrolling children to begin school were given an opportunity to indicate whether they preferred a 1,2 class or a 1,2,3 class. At the same time the teachers were given the opportunity to indicate children who, they considered ought to be shifted to another class.

As a result of this complicated negotiation process a few children who would be entering their second year at school were shifted to other Units. A few parents requested changes at this level and they tended to go into the single classroom for year 2and 3 children. There were a number who chose the straight year three above the multi-age 1,2,3. Even here, though, the number of parents who sought this option were not large enough to create any problems about numbers in the 1,2,3 Units.

A positive outcome of all this negotiation, where parents saw that their views were taken into account, was that many parents who had no particular views about the 1986 project became committed to it once it was under question. A few parents attending the parents day at the school on 11 November were surveyed by the observer. These parents were well aware of the controversy, had listened to both sides and had decided to leave their children in the Units where they were currently enrolled because they felt that their children were benefitting from the changes.

Networks of Teachers Who Had Elected to Become Involved in Change:

Earlier in the year teachers and administrators involved in multi-age classes had established a network for themselves so that they could share ideas and concerns about the changes they were making. The assistant administrator at Leafy Wood had been the initiator of a network among teachers within after school driving distance of one another. The idea of networks seems to have been a felt need for others too, for other networks were started about the same time among teachers on the Sunshine Coast and in Brisbane South.

In this last quarter of the year there were two 'MAG NETWORK' meetings, one at Everson Park State School and another at Paverly Road State School. At the Paverly Road meeting teachers from Brisbane South Region came on a visit. At the first of these meetings, the main topic of discussion after visiting the teachers' rooms was grouping policy for 1987. It seemed that schools other than Leafy Wood were negotiating the decision about whether to extend from a 1,2 grouping to a 1,2,3 grouping, and about the extent to which parents should have a choice about grouping arrangements for their children.

> We also have to take into account what is happening from one setting to the next setting. You get comparisons made about one school doing one form of organisation and the school a hop, skip and a jump away doing traditional organisation. The parent is fearing 'if my child goes into a new setting will he have to do some catching up'.
>
> I think that is one of the realities that we have to cope with. Really it gets down to this point that I have to make in interviews with parents, that 'you have to make the decision as to where you want your child put. I will give you the option of a straight class or multi-age units, but you make the decision and making that decision implies that you have some understanding. It is up to me to provide opportunities for you to understand through visits to the Units. I'm prepared to talk to anyone at anytime but in the end you make the decision and if you are not happy with what is going on, there are plenty of other schools to go to. I'm serious, without the parent being happy about what is happening with the child you don't necessarily have parental support which is vital. I think we should say that at the outset.

Teachers were also interested in sharing their ideas about strategies for getting started in the new year. At the end of this meeting it was decided that mathematics was to be the topic for the next meeting because so many teachers felt that they needed more help in planning for mathematics in a multi-age group situation.

As attendance at these meetings appeared to be growing it can be assumed that teachers were finding the sharing of ideas and concerns among equals to be a useful form of support during the change process.

Wider Structural Influences:

'Wider structural influences' is the term being used to refer to all those recurring, but often subtle influences on what teachers see to be viable decisions to make about change. The media, for instance, and the Department of Education are social structures which tend to be taken into account by teachers when making decisions about change. In this last quarter of the year such influences tended to support what teachers were currently endeavouring to do and were therefore not remarked on. It was fortunate that in this period the back-to-basics thrust among people commenting in the media was balanced by comments supporting curriculum goals such as independent thinking and flexibility of learning opportunities.

As the supportive nature of a school culture comes to be accepted as 'natural', so too does a generally supportive wider society.

However, it is worth commenting here on one report which was supportive of what the school was doing and which would have helped school personnel to feel secure about the change process they were engaged in.

The *Report of the Committee of Review: Education 2000 Submissions* was published in August, 1986 and would have been read by the teachers by October. Among the recommendations made in the curriculum issues section of the Report it was recommended that the functional grouping of curriculum for the Years P-3 be supported provided that:

> (a) the present early childhood philosophy which is developmentally-based and responsive to young children's needs and interests be the dominant influence;
>
> (f) a desirable standard in basic learning skills can be achieved under the informal approach and the ungraded organisation; "
>
> (pages 80-81)

Teachers in the last weeks of the school year had their views confirmed that they were maintaining a desirable standard in basic learning skills. They were trying to implement a curriculum based on the philosophy of early childhood education which was developmentally-based and responsive to young children's abilities and interests.

They could, therefore, feel confident that their current curriculum initiatives were supported in principle by members of the Queensland society who had contributed to the 987 submissions received in response to the discussion document *EDUCATION 2000: Issues and Options for the Future of Education in Queensland.*

CONCLUSION

REFLECTING ON THE CHANGE PROCESS

In response to a request made at the meeting in March the following comments were written by the teachers for inclusion here:

Linda: To feel the need to change and then <u>really</u> change has been a disturbing process. It's so easy to slide back into familiar teaching practices. You should see us now, more changes, more progress. Insecurity still creeps in but I know so much more and my experiences have changed my attitude to children and school. I couldn't and wouldn't go back.

Helen: One cannot argue with the accuracy of this record. It is a faithful record of the dynamics and a sensitive interpretation of the 'challenges' we experienced, and it highlights the major issues confronting the teams.

Jan: After reading the completed document two main points became clear:
(1) There is no 'right' way to go about change - it is mostly trial and error; and relative to the children involved, the staff, resources and the community;
(2) The common concern for all those involved, from the inspector down, was to search out ways and means of creating the most effective learning environment for young children. Congratulations Gail, you have been able to relate honestly throughout this document our many frustrations and achievements of 1986.

Rhonda: An accurately tabled account of this interviewee's contribution. I'm so pleased it reflects my philosophy. It is interesting to note that the problems that are surfacing now [March '87) were not recognised until April, May and June '86.

Unit 4: I found being part of the project a very valuabe learning experience . I feel I've grown professionally and personally. I found I had useful coping mechanisms from which I was able to draw.

Unit 3: We felt it was a worthwhile experience; as a result we have

- a feeling of achievement
- the reassurance that everyone is experiencing the same difficulties
- undertaken a great deal of self-reflection through talking about the report and reading the comments of other teachers
- become more positive about vertical grouping now we can see the results.

Soon after the school year started in 1987 the administrators and the teachers in the study made at Leafy Wood State School were asked to check what was written in the case study and to indicate whether they considered it to be an accurate portrayal of the change process they had been involved in during 1986 and prior to that year. They were also asked to consider the possibility of distributing the document among a wider group of teachers.

Accuracy of the portrayal:

The school staff met with the investigator in early March. It was generally agreed that the report was an accurate portrayal of teacher concerns and teacher actions during this first year of change involving multi-age grouping of children. A few minor amendments were suggested to ensure an accurate record, for instance, seven of the eight teachers were married, not all eight as was claimed in the draft viewed by the teachers.

The case study was very warmly received by the teachers and the administration team. Teachers felt that the report had been valuable to them at the beginning of the year, for it provided a basis for reflection as they began work on their second year of change. One teaching team commented that they had decided that they were now working at about the stage they were at in July the previous year. Others commented that it was easy to forget how difficult it had been at the beginning of the year to get children initiated into the routines. The report had reminded them about this and helped them understand why they were again feeling frustrated with their own efforts to help children become used to the routine.

In general the staff felt that the report did help them become more reflective about the change process. They also commented that having the investigator visiting at regular intervals during the year had been valuable, for she provided non-judgemental information about what teachers were doing and a forum where teachers could reflect on their progress. They felt that this helped them keep to their goals and to monitor progress objectively.

Distribution of report:

The case study was written with particular types of audience in mind. In the first instance it was written for the teachers who were actually involved in the change process described here, providing for them a basis, over and above their own memories, for reflecting about their experiences and evaluating the actions they took in 1986. It was also written for teachers joining the project at Leafy Wood in the future, providing information for them about what had already taken place.

Other teachers involved in change, especially those just getting started on change, constituted another potential audience for whom the story was written. At the meeting in March the teachers and the school administration team were

asked to consider whether they were willing to make this personalised story about their experiences available to others. It was proposed by the writer of the case study that a restricted circulation of the document be made in 1987, through a proposed Q NET program and through word of mouth at multi-age group teacher network meetings. This proposal was accepted by the teachers, who felt that the portrayal of their own experiences might be useful to others, at the very least in reassuring them that change is a slow and slightly unpredictable process.

Patterns in the change process:

Certain patterns in the change process were noted by the investigator during the year of observation. These weave their way through the document shaping the way the story is told.

The chapter headings indicate one pattern in the way change occurred. In preparing for change the staff focused on philosophic issues such as beliefs about how children learn and possible constraints such as the availability of resources which supported the agreed beliefs about how children learn. At this stage it was considered important to the project goals to avoid the use of labels such as 'Year One's' or 'Year Twos' in the multi-age grouped Units in order to establish expectations based on individual development rather than on year level expectations.

As teachers began to implement their plans in the first quarter, they focused on organisation and management issues, such as room arrangement and time-tabling changes which would provide for more hands-on activity on the part of learners. It was found, however, that changes in these areas did not, in themselves, lead to less emphasis on grade related curriculum practices.

The second quarter of the year tended to be a time where teachers reassessed their first initiatives in an effort to lessen a perceived gap between ideals and realities. For instance, for a variety of reasons it was found to be difficult to avoid referring to children by year level terms despite the earlier attention to labelling. Also teachers now found that they needed to look more closely at the style of activity they selected so that they could be sure that children were learning effectively when working in other than year level groups. This period has been characterised as a consolidation phase in the change process when fewer changes were initiated.

The third quarter brought divergences among the teaching teams, with some choosing to extend the consolidation stage and to make greater use of teaching strategies which had been found to be successful in the past. Other teams made renewed attempts to lessen the gap between their ideals and realities in their classrooms, making further modifications to the style of activity they provided for children as their major strategy at this stage. There appeared to be a range of influences which led to the divergences among the teachers, past teaching experience and personal philosophies being important at this stage as well as

personal circumstances such as leave or family considerations. Another significant influence, when it meshed with the teacher's own philosophy, was the Early Literacy Inservice Course.

In the last quarter of the year the teachers and the local community were very interested in assessing the effectiveness of the project and in the decisions to be made for the following year. A certain level of insecurity crept in at this stage as the opportunity to make major changes in direction was present and differing perspectives were allowed to become part of the shared decision-making at the school.

An interesting rhythm in the actions and reactions of teachers was noted each quarter. This was a rhythm of high expectations, confidence and initiative followed by anxiety and loss of confidence as ideals and reality did not quite mesh, then, after a break in
the school year or some other event that helped teachers recoup their energies, a re-adjustment of expectations. The cycle then began all over again, with expectations adjusted up or down perhaps depending on teacher assessment of potential success and the strength of the ideals of the teachers involved.

At the beginning of each quarter teachers had high expectations of success and were confidently looking forward to putting their plans into action. As they began to implement their plans they discovered anew each quarter that there was no direct link between ideals imbodied in plans and the reality of working with children and adults within a particular physical environment. It was also evident that each quarter teachers discounted the amount of time needed to make changes. Each quarter they discovered, but quickly forgot, that old 'habits', or teaching skills that were formerly important, were difficult to change and new skills did not appear overnight. They also 'forgot' that it took children, and adults with some interest in the program, time to adjust to new practices and that people can also become insecure when faced with changes in what was familiar (even when they favour the changes). As these teachers found, there are one hundred and one intervening variables to be taken into account when putting an ideal into practice.

Another pattern noted was the way in which teachers attempted to deal with the difficulty of meshing ideals and realities. At the beginning of the year the teachers referred to the shared philosophy underlying the proposed change. In the early stages the teachers indicated an awareness that different people with an interest in what was happening held different perceptions on the relationship between the ideal and the reality of day-to-day practice. As the year progressed the teachers began to refer more frequently on their personal belief structure, so that different emphases in what was considered to be problematic began to appear among the teaching teams. This was most evident with regard to the issue of choice which continued to be a major source of concern to some teachers and a major area of teacher endeavour for them. Other teachers gave this less emphasis and it therefore was less problematic for them.

Of course there were other patterns in the series of actions that teachers took in their endeavours to reach the goal of providing a style of curriculum that catered for developmental differences among learners.

Reasons behind the style of report:

This is a story designed to describe as accurately as possible the experiences of teachers and the actual curriculum practices they trialled, adapted and modified over the course of the first year of change. By portraying the process of change, using photographs and extracts from interviews with teachers for illustrative purposes, it is intended that the reader will have a basis for understanding various curriculum practices implemented in the classrooms and other aspects of the change process.

Every reader of this story will bring personal beliefs and past experiences to the business of making sense of someone else's world, and will focus on aspects of the story told here that are of particular interest to them. The story is told in a form which
should encourage readers to make their own deductions as they compare the experiences of these teachers with the knowledge they already have about curriculum practice in the lower-primary school, the contexts within which teachers work and about the process of changing any well-entrenched classroom practice.

This is a story designed to describe as accurately as possible the experiences of teachers and the actual curriculum practices they trialled, adapted and modified over the course of the first year of change. By portraying the process of change, using photographs and extracts from interviews with the teachers for illustrative purposes, it is intended that the reader will have a basis for understanding various curriculum practices implemented in the classroom and other aspects of the change process.

Every reader of this story will bring personal beliefs and past experiences to the business of making sense of someone else's world, and will focus on aspects of the story told here that are of particular interest to them. The story is told in a form which should encourage readers to make their own deductions as they compare the experiences of these teachers with the knowledge they already have about curriculum practice in the lower-primary school, the contexts within which teachers work, and, about the process of changing any well-entrenched classroom practice.

Gail Halliwell is currently a senior lecturer in the School of Early Childhood Studies, Brisbane C.A.E., where she continues to pursue a long-term interest in the quality of the curriculum experiences made available to young children. Her practical teaching experience includes over twelve years teaching in early childhood settings in Queensland - the first years of primary school, preschool and kindergarten. She spent a number of years working on change projects within the Department of Education, as a curriculum officer, then as a regional preschool officer and later as a senior education officer. Over the past nine years she has been investigating the process of change in how the curriculum is being implemented in early education classes and in the lower-primary school.